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Christendom

Chas. Girdlestone

LONDON

Spencer, Low, Gifford & Mearns



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CHRISTENDOM,

SKETCHED FROM HISTORY

IN THE LIGHT OF

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

IN this volume the author has endeavored to draw a faithful likeness, however slightly sketched, of Christendom, as it has existed from its commencement, down to the present time; especially as regards the quality of its Christianity, professed, and practised. He has done his best to delineate correctly the salient features of its character, as manifested by conduct, both in public and private life; but always regarded in the light of those Christian Scriptures, to which it challenges a reference by its very name. If the portrait thus produced proves not so pleasing as might well be desired, it is natural to inquire, first, whether the lamp of Scripture light has been so adjusted, as to cast upon the features portrayed a false hue, or an artificially dark shadow; and next, whether the facts to which history and experience testify, as to the manner of life generally prevalent in Christendom, have been fairly stated, and impartially represented. In regard to the first point of inquiry, the Bible is in the hands of all; so that every one can judge for himself how far it has been properly

brought to bear upon the subject ; whether the pure light of gospel truth, or the colored rays of prejudice and party spirit, have been the medium through which Christendom has been viewed. As to the facts adduced from history, it would be obviously out of place, in a work of this kind, to cumber each page with references to original authorities. The reader will find both the facts and the authorities in such church histories as those of Mosheim, Milner, Waddington, Townsend, and Jortin ; in such general histories as those of Gibbon, and Hallam ; in the histories of Europe and of England in common use ; and in such works on special departments as Isaac Taylor's *Ancient Christianity*, Stanley's *Eastern Churches*, and Sheppard's *Fall of Rome and Rise of the New Nationalities*.

The division of the subject into periods of centuries has been adopted for general convenience, with the full consciousness that these limits could not be always observed exactly ; the events of one period being in many ways interwoven with those of another, in the unintermitting texture of continuous history. Pains have been taken that no prominence should be given to any one feature of the subject, out of due proportion to all the others ; and such few details as seemed compatible with the plan of a mere sketch, have been carefully subordinated to the harmony of the composition as a whole. The one chapter near the end, especially devoted to our own country, may seem to be an exception to this principle. But the great influence of England

in modern Christendom, and the wide extent of our colonies and dependencies, seem to warrant this exceptional treatment of a single realm; independently of its being the country of the author, and of any readers who are likely to peruse his pages.

In testing the character of Christendom by the inspired teachings of the New Testament, those portions of the sacred volume which form the battle field of controversialists have been avoided as far as possible, and in nearly every instance appeal has been made, either to the spirit which pervades the whole, or to passages which all parties construe in the same sense, and which indicate those practical graces of the gospel, whereby both men and systems may be known, as trees are by their fruits. If within these limits the author has occasionally pronounced opinions without stating arguments in support of them, it must be remembered, that there is not much room for reasoning in a sketch of eighteen centuries and more, comprized in one small volume. And moreover it will be found, that, with scarcely any exception, although reasons are not always given in detail, the principle involving them has been laid down at no great distance from the passages in which opinions are thus decidedly expressed. The task of exposing transgressions and shortcomings, imposed by the nature of the work, could not but prove most painful; and it is one in which it has been no easy matter to temper sincerity with charity, "speaking the truth in love." But he who is conscious, as he writes, that his words involve many a sentence of condemnation applicable

with profit to his own case, will not hesitate to set forth facts exactly as he finds them; well knowing, that a due conviction of deficiencies and delinquencies is an indispensable prerequisite to amendment, alike in himself and in his brethren.

To his Christian brethren of all denominations, especially to those of his own communion, including all his dear relatives and friends, as well as to the parishioners of the places mentioned in the title page, where his lot has been cast as incumbent,—to all these the author dedicates his volume, in the hope that it may help some of them in discerning the path of duty between the Christianity which passes current in Christendom, and that which has been once for all revealed in the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE,
March 6, 1870.

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2

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTENDOM; THE DOMAIN OF SECONDARY CHRISTIANITY.

It is no valid argument against the truth of any system, to object that it is not intelligently apprehended, or not consistently carried out by those who professedly adopt it. And yet multitudes, both in Christendom, and beyond its borders, have been led to doubt the divine origin of the Gospel, by reason of the glaring inconsistency between that which Christianity purports to be, and that which Christians, so called, for the most part actually are. Christendom is indeed a name of high pretension, denoting, as it would seem, the realms in which Christianity and its Author bear sway. And so our dictionaries define this title, telling us, that "dom" signifies dominion. And therefore in Christendom it is reasonable to expect that Christ will be found to reign supreme; and that his will, as set forth by Himself and his apostles, will be visibly and effectively reduced to practice. But the expectation suggested by the title thus apprehended is painfully baffled, alike by the history of the past and by our present experience. Christendom, surveyed from any point

of view exterior to itself, must undoubtedly present an appearance little like to the ideal of Christian society portrayed in the pages of the New Testament. And it is no marvel, that by far the greater portion of the human race still hesitate to adopt a religion, which, so far as they can judge from its effects, has failed to mould after its own fashion the bulk of those by whom it is professed. Let Christianity be compared in this respect with any one of those religious delusions, which prevail over large numbers of the human race ; such as the legends of Brahma or of Buddha. Or let the memorable imposture of Mahomet be taken into view, being more familiarly known. And it will be admitted, that the aspect of a Mahometan community, as to manners and customs, as to morals, and as to attendance on its religious ordinances, corresponds with the general tenor of the Mussulman Koran, much more faithfully than Christendom has ever been seen to harmonize with the sacred books of Christianity. For the fact is, that falsehood ever finds congenial soil in frail human nature, and secures consistent proselytes to a system which is indulgent to sin and sensuality ; whilst the truth, which will make no compromise with evil, although it convince the understanding, often fails to influence the life. Hence it naturally comes to pass, that the generality of the people bearing the name of Mahomet are genuine Mahometans, whilst those who bear the name of Christ are by no means so generally or so thoroughly Christian. Mahometan territories are actually the

kingdom of Mahomet. Christendom is not the kingdom of Christ.

And yet the two are rarely distinguished, the one from the other, as they ought to be. Christendom, viewed from without, say as it would be regarded by an intelligent member of heathendom, one who walks by his own mistaken notions consistently, is not unreasonably looked upon as a fair representation of Christianity, properly so called. And thus regarded, it must give to such a beholder an impression very remote from the truth. Preeminence in arms and in arts would be its most striking features. Success in securing this world's power, and riches, and pleasures, and praise, would seem to be its main object and achievement. And whilst the history of Christendom testifies to the fact, that its territories were extended to their present limits, in times past, by the use of arguments most alien to Christianity; there is reason to think, that any sensible enlargement of its borders, now going on, is to be ascribed, in no small degree, to the dazzling influence of its ascendancy in things pertaining to this present life. But whatsoever Christendom may be, we can have no doubt about the kingdom of Christ, that it certainly is "not of this world," is not worldly. It is not of sense; it is within; not of the flesh, but of the spirit. It is the reign of the Saviour, sovereign in the heart, and sanctifying the believer by the inward working of the Holy Ghost. It is not what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. It is not to be masters of the East and of the West, of

the North and of the South; and to engross the chiefest of the productions of all climes, as tributary to our superior intelligence and might. But it is to excel in self denial and humility; to be proficient in integrity, purity, and charity; and to dwell in cordial brotherhood with all men during our sojourn in this transitory state. It is to find our peace and joy in contentedness and thankfulness, in self improvement, and doing good around us, in serving others, and in ruling ourselves. And it is ever to realize the presence, power, and majesty of an unseen Lord and King, as enthroned both in heaven above, and in the hearts of his disciples by faith; as at once human and divine, the sin subduing Saviour of the fallen race of man. In this dominion each subject obeys the laws of the inward realm, in the spirit of devout loyalty to its unseen Sovereign; laws written on the tablets of each believer's heart; and consisting not in precise rules and prohibitions, but in pregnant principles, applicable to every possible case of conduct, and guiding the devout disciple, in the performance of each duty as it occurs, whether personal, domestic, social, civil, or political, by the unerring instinct of all comprehensive love. Of this kingdom of heaven, as it might be realized on earth, we catch some glimpses when we read of believers continuing "stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship;"—of their having "all things in common;"—of the respect and awe which restrained those who felt no true fellowship with them inwardly from joining them outwardly;—of their suffering

meekly the loss of goods, liberty, and life, for Christ's sake;—and of their enemies bearing witness in their favor with astonishment, saying, “See how these Christians love one another!” This testimony however could never have been truly applied to Christians in general, since the time when they became dominant instead of persecuted in the world; these descriptions never have been justly applicable to Christendom, properly so called, since the commencement of its existence in ascendancy. No, certainly; whatever be the actual community to which that name belongs, it cannot possibly be one and the same thing with the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

We know where the name of Christian was first given to Christ's disciples. We know also, that from the beginning there were some that bare the name without partaking of the reality. Even whilst persecution from without, and due discipline within the community, were both tending to exclude all but the truly faithful and devout, there were tares mingled with the wheat; and we are led to expect that so it will be, even until the end, in the very kingdom of Christ itself. But besides other elements of adulteration, it is important to observe, that the terms of admission into that kingdom were, soon after its foundation, greatly relaxed, and even wholly ignored, not unfrequently, in at least one of their most essential conditions. In making men disciples of Christ, two things, totally distinct, were expressly enjoined by Himself. “Baptizing them” is one of these particulars; baptizing them into a

Name of profound significance. And this, so far as it is an outward rite and ceremony, has been generally retained in practice, as such, by Christians from the beginning. But as to the other particular enjoined, namely, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," this has rarely been held alike indispensable. Hence it has come to pass, that throughout Christendom, in all ages, there have been multitudes, called Christians, wholly devoid of one fundamental element of discipleship, and in whose outward visible conduct there has in fact been little or no conformity to the Christian model. And owing to the large number of those whose profession and life have been thus at variance, the term "Christian" has become practically ambiguous, needing some such addition as "real," or "genuine," when one who is such has to be distinguished from one who merely bears the name. The word "Christianity" is in like manner ambiguous; sometimes denoting religion as revealed in the Bible, and sometimes standing for the same as exhibited in the practice of Christendom. Somewhat also of the like ambiguity occurs in the use of the word "Christendom," enough to mislead many who make use of it unthinkingly; but not the result of any actual difficulty in discerning whether Christendom be Christian truly and thoroughly, or only partially or nominally. Though we may not be able to trace this name to the time and place of its first use, we can distinctly apprehend the thing for which it stands. We cannot be mistaken as to the nature and constitution of the whole realm

called Christendom, as to its manners and customs, its moral and religious institutions; in all its wide extent, and long duration, as set forth in history, from the time that the world's rulers became Christian by profession. Then, and not till then, did Christendom, properly speaking, shew itself in existence. And assuredly it neither was at that time, nor has been ever since, the kingdom of Christianity proper; that is to say, not the kingdom of pure, primary, apostolic Christianity, but of that which may perhaps best be called secondary. It comprises that portion of the human race who generally hold, as a matter of opinion, that Christianity is true, whether or not they believe it in the heart. Throughout its extent, the Holy Bible is commonly acknowledged to be inspired by the one living and true God who made the universe, and to contain a revelation, authenticated by means supernatural, fitted to teach man his Maker's will, and to move man to believe in Him, love Him, and obey Him. In Christendom this is the prevailing opinion. And on the strength of this general acquiescence in the inspiration of the Bible, and of the general admission that Jesus Christ is the central object of the whole revelation, and that the New Testament is the full and final expression of the divine will in his person, Christendom assumes itself to be Christian, names itself as if it were Christ's kingdom, proposes to itself to practise and to propagate Christianity, and even conceives itself to be actually doing so.

But this homage to the force of incontrovertible

truth is paid by many, who at the same time repudiate altogether the transcendent claims of the Gospel on the heart and life of its adherents. And strange to say, amongst these are some who are at once the most passionate champions of its truth, and the most habitual transgressors of its precepts. There are many others who do really though feebly aim at satisfying the requirements of the faith which they profess, when no costly self denial is involved; reserving liberty to postpone them, when interfering with present interests and obligations. There are also many who avow an entire unbelief in Christianity; sometimes thereby incurring the displeasure of their neighbours, sometimes rather gaining popularity. Mingled in the mass dwelling within Christendom are some Jews, some Mahometans, and some who are still heathen. And besides all these, there are the genuine believers in Christ; those whose citizenship in his kingdom is real, whose loyal obedience to his laws is seen by Him, whether discernible by man or not, to be rendered in true homage to Himself, not in deference to the ascendancy of his religion in the world. Taking then the whole Christian population of Christendom in the mass, as it is and ever has been hitherto, we feel constrained to admit, that it cannot be accounted the dominion of Him whose name it bears, except in a very imperfect and merely secondary sense. Its general lineaments, which it is the object of this work to represent correctly, bear but slight and superficial resemblance to the Christianity set forth in the graphic

pages of the Gospel of its Lord. Its religion may have helped to civilize, but it has not availed to spiritualize. It may have superseded idol temples by cathedrals, and churches, and chapels. But it has not supplanted the formal service of rites and ceremonies by the worshipping of a Spirit "in spirit and in truth." It boasts of mitigating some of the horrors of warfare, but some of these have been aggravated since it prevailed; and it has done nothing towards suppressing the abomination of war itself. Perhaps one of the best things that can be said for the religion prevalent in Christendom as a whole is this, that it has improved the tone of domestic life, raising woman to her proper ministry in the sanctuary of home. And yet it has not succeeded in putting out of countenance pollutions which may not be even named amongst saints. It has quickened the powers of man's mind, and takes credit for having helped to fit them for subduing nature's powers to man's uses. But it has not induced the great discoverers of modern science, except in some few illustrious instances, to be ever watchful, that they glorify the Creator in his works. Its professors have circled the earth with commercial enterprize; but it has not purified commerce from greed, grasping, and chicanery. Under its sanction the enjoyments and refinements of the wealthy few have been carried to a higher pitch than ever elsewhere. But all the while it has permitted multitudes of the poorer class to remain, often close to the palaces of the rich, crowded in vile hovels, and sunk in the lowest depths of want,

ignorance, and vice, of which human nature is susceptible.

It is not denied that Christendom, under the influence of this its secondary Christianity, has attained unto a rank in this present world, far above the realms of Pagan, or of Mahometan superstition. But its very name implies that worldly rank is worthless. And as to its high estimation in that world unseen, where the veil of sense no longer screens realities, as to the elevated portion of its members generally in the life to come, these are points on which already we shall be apt to form a very different opinion, if we examine them in the light afforded by revelation. We have the highest authority for holding, that the things which men esteem most precious may be all the while abomination in the sight of God. To know the truth, to admit it to be true, and yet to repudiate its claims on the undivided allegiance of the heart, to adopt the Saviour's name, and take pride in the denomination, and yet to reject the salvation He came to offer, grieving the Holy Spirit by neither seeking his help, nor obeying his impulses, but living as citizens of earth, instead of as heirs of immortality ; this is of all conditions the one over which the judgment to come lowers with the most appalling gloom. And even in reference to this life only, as it is often found that the best things when corrupted become the worst, so the civilization resulting from secondary Christianity, with all its advantages, has been productive, as we shall see hereafter, of some serious evils unknown to the dwellers in the wilder-

ness. And were it otherwise, to be civilized and to be evangelized are things totally different. Secondary Christianity is no more than a diluted and adulterated form of Christianity primary and proper. Christendom is not the kingdom of Christ. And inasmuch as they cannot, without serious detriment, be mistaken the one for the other, it becomes important to indicate explicitly what Christendom really is; to trace it from its origin to the present period, and to mark the stages of its progress, up to the attainment of its actual condition now; noting, as we proceed, its true character in its various phases, and exhibiting, by way of contrast, from time to time, the nature of that kingdom of Christ, which genuine Christianity establishes in the blessed company of all true believers.

As to the evil resulting from our taking objects so entirely different as Christendom and Christ's kingdom for one and the same, it might suffice to state, that every falsehood, every false notion, is in itself necessarily pernicious; and that in all our impressions truth is to be desired, even for its own sake alone. But it may further be observed, in illustration of the subject under discussion, that the prevalent confusion of ideas in this matter is apt to beguile the dwellers in Christendom into a perilous self complacency, as to their safe and satisfactory condition, both for time and for eternity. Familiar with the notion that they have been highly favored by being born and bred in realms enlightened by the Gospel, they are tempted to take it for granted, that they cannot but be thereby gainers,

irrespectively of the use they make of their advantages. Most men have their notions and habits of life shaped for them, to a great extent, by the circumstances in the midst of which they live, and by the requirements of the society they belong to. It is given to few, in comparison, to lift themselves habitually in their thoughts far above the level in which outwardly they dwell, and to survey, as from some higher sphere, the whole human family of all ages and all climes ; and instead of relying on the privileges of their own position, to regard with sympathy the trials and the troubles of the rest ; and to lay to heart how unfavorably their own shortcomings must appear, viewed from the same high platform, in connexion with their better opportunities. Thus regarded, we who dwell in Christendom would be seen to have more to answer for than the rest of our race ; and yet at the same time to be surrounded by influences ever tending to lower our aspirations towards the fulfilment of that high calling, to which we stand pledged by professing ourselves Christian. And unless we bear in mind habitually, that the religion generally upheld in the practice of those around us is merely a secondary Christianity, we shall be tempted to acquiesce in the indolent conclusion, that to pass for respectable in the society of Christendom is equivalent to being Christians indeed. Thus the standard of duty and fidelity would be sure to be lowered most injuriously ; as we find to be very generally the case. Even those who strive to hold that standard most aloft must often feel, how hard it is to carry out

their high principles in the presence of feeble convictions; and must be conscious of many a grievous inconsistency, whilst endeavouring to be at once unblameable before God, charitable towards man, and humble in their own hearts. Indeed to follow after holiness ever further and further, as they that press towards the mark for a prize, seems to savour of presumption in the few who honestly attempt it; whereas it ought to be the daily effort of all alike. And even pastors the most eminent in faithfulness and zeal seem usually content, if they may be the means of converting some, and of edifying others; instead of constantly endeavouring, according to apostolic precedent, to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Besides this deteriorating influence on the dwellers in Christendom, a very injurious effect is wrought also on those who dwell beyond its borders, by the mistaken apprehension of its true nature, and the supposing it to be a real embodiment of genuine Christianity. Its missionaries, heroes as they often are in calm courage and self sacrifice, must be almost more than human, were they to go forth on their errands of mercy uncontaminated by the errors and the corruptions, the prejudices and the divisions, of the communities which they leave behind them. But missionaries are not the members of Christendom from whom, as from samples, the quality of Christianity has been for the most part estimated, amongst them that dwell in other regions of our earth. Its traders, and its mariners, its soldiers, and its adventurers, these have supplied

the obvious and familiar specimens of the religion, the morals, and the general tone of character, presumably prevailing, where these marvellous and formidable beings came from. Limiting our remarks to the new quarters of the world, we find Christendom represented in Australasia, chiefly by its convicts in the first instance, and by troops sent to act as a check upon their enormities. And as to America, though centuries have intervened since its discovery, it is not possible even now, to think without a sense of burning shame of Christendom; as presented in Mexico to Montezuma, or to the Incas in Peru; or to the simple minded and trustful population of those two empires, so promising as fields of missionary enterprize, so soon desolated by the fraud, violence, and rapacity of men bearing the Christian name. Would we judge of the aspect in which the Christendom of a later age was regarded, by such observers as the untutored Indians of the forest? Let us note the indignant reply of one of their chiefs, to the appeal of a faithful preacher of the Gospel: "Christian lie,—Christian cheat,—Christian steal,—Christian drink;—Christian murder my father,—corrupt my sister,—encroach on my land,—ruin my tribe;—the devil Christian;—me no Christian."

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTENDOM ; IN EMBRYO. CENTURIES 1, 2, 3.

IN apostolic times, and long afterwards, the Christendom with which later ages have been familiar had no existence. And if there were no means of tracing it to its birth, except by reasoning from its character, and taking into account the fact, that it professes to derive its origin from certain books which it deems most sacred, and to which its name refers, we might naturally conclude, that the gospel therein revealed by the Christ of whom those Scriptures testify, must uphold this world and its prizes, its riches, pleasures, power, and reputation, as the prime objects of a Christian man's pursuits. The thrones of Christendom are seen to have been founded on conquest, and its kingdoms enlarged by aggression. Its churches have contended for sovereign preeminence, no less eagerly, no less unscrupulously, than its most domineering states. Its highest honors have been awarded to proficiency in warfare or state policy ; with little reference to moral or religious qualifications. Its riches, soonest gained by subtlety, and amassed by covetousness, are chiefly lavished on the purveyors of selfish enjoyments. And its literature, in almost every de-

partment, reflects the tenor of these its manners and customs, by suggesting or assuming the supreme importance of things tangible and creditable in the world's esteem. But although these are undoubtedly the characteristics of Christendom, very different are the principles of action which the books it counts for sacred most explicitly enjoin. And it is to a gospel, the very reverse of that which we might expect, a gospel of self sacrifice, exemplified in its great Teacher and central Object, that history constrains us to resort, for the origin of the mixt community named after Him.

The Holy Bible is a volume which stands alone amongst all books that ever were, in its claims on man's homage, and in the criticism by which those claims have been scanned age after age ; as well as in the ascendancy which they have maintained, all the greater, the more they have been questioned, over the most intelligent races of mankind. Not even the scandal that goes up to heaven, from the unholy lives of those who receive Scripture as inspired, has prevented it from retaining on earth its matchless position of authority, as a revelation made to man by his Maker. Part of this book belongs to Jews as well as Christians. But the New Testament is generally received as the more especial and proper charter of Christendom. And yet throughout its pages we find the most unmitigated reprobation of all the selfishness and sensuality, the covetousness and ambition, with which Christendom has been uniformly familiar. We hear the divine Teacher ever calling on his disciples, to set their hearts upon the objects of the world

unseen. For his own part, He had emptied Himself of glory ineffable, that He might seek and save the lost. He selected his associates, the first preachers of his Gospel, from ranks of life the least elevated in birth or wealth. And as if to put us altogether out of conceit with the world's pomps and vanities, and to teach us never to be ashamed of poverty, nor to respect any one the less for being poor, He tells us of Himself that "the Son of man had not where to lay his head." The very name by which He thus designates Himself, referring merely to his human parentage, is well calculated to wean men from that childish fondness for titles and precedence, which has nevertheless been quite as prevalent in Christendom as elsewhere.


Such were the principles to which believers stood committed, when faith in Christ was professed at the risk of life. And such was the character impressed by the Holy Spirit on the little flock, "called out," as the name "*ecclesia*" denotes, from a world lying in wickedness. In this privileged community, gathered from amongst Jews and Gentiles, and subject to persecution by both, it was ordained, that open departure from Gospel truth, and gross default of Christian practice, should be restrained as far as possible, by the exercise of a salutary discipline. And among such a band of brethren, the apprehension of an open trial, and of an upright sentence, to be followed, in case of conviction, by public admonition, and by exclusion from brotherly communion, must have proved an efficient aid to frail humanity against tempta-

tion in many of its forms. Yet even in the apostolic epistles we find mention of very serious transgressions then committed, as well as warning of gross degeneracy in time to come. The Corinthians are charged with reckless separatism, the Galatians with being deluded as though by witchery in favor of another gospel. We read of a Diotrophes "loving to have the preeminence," of a Demas who out of love "for this present world" forsook the apostle Paul; who himself moreover mentions "perils by false brethren," in the recital of the troubles to which his office had exposed him. And as to the future, there occurs in the same part of the sacred volume the following portentous prophecy: "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

But with all these drawbacks present and in prospect, the progress of Christianity was so rapid, that, as far as this was genuine, it can only be explained by taking into account the miracles wrought in proof of its authority. It is true that the Roman world, in which this progress took effect, was at the time in a state of peace favorable to the apostolic mission. But this unwonted stillness of the nations resulted from the firm pressure of an iron despotism, closely wedded to pagan idolatries; and one which,

however willing to add fresh deities to its catalogue, insisted sternly on having all due homage paid to those which were already there. And besides confronting the recently consolidated force of the mightiest of empires, Christianity had also to encounter the subtle reasonings of Greek philosophers, and the attractive delusions of Oriental mystics, the vested interests of the priests and of other retainers of the established superstitions, and, above all, those deeply rooted habits of selfishness and sensuality, which rendered the heathendom of that period, however high its pretensions in literature and art, yet in respect of morals, personal, social, and political, little else than a principality of darkness. In contending with these obstacles, the apostles and their fellow laborers had on their side the force of truth, the evidence of facts testified by eye-witnesses, the sufficiency of the salvation by them proclaimed to meet the spiritual necessities of man's nature, and the attractive character of the Saviour, whom they uniformly presented to their hearers as Himself "the way, the truth, and the life." They had moreover in their favor that instinctive reaction of the human mind against persecution for conscience sake, and that sympathy felt for those who proved faithful to their convictions even unto death, which almost warrants the proverbial assertion, that the blood of martyrs was the seed of the church. And if they must have often experienced, that they in their missionary work, as well as in their own Christian course, had arrayed against them foes other than those of flesh and blood, they were no less

conscious of assistance from the world of the unseen. They had the sure promise to rely upon, that if, in making men disciples, they followed faithfully their Lord's injunctions, He would be ever with them. And in the miraculous powers imparted by the Holy Spirit, they enjoyed proof conclusive to themselves, as well as to the beholders, that He whose Gospel they were preaching did indeed confirm "the word by signs following." No wonder that ere the close of the first century the new religion had obtained firm footing in all quarters of the Roman world. And by the end of the third century, not far from one fourth of the population were counted for Christians by profession ; whilst probably at least another fourth part were of opinion, that no other religion had any valid claim to their adherence. Early in this period the apostles having gone to their rest, and the power of working miracles having been gradually withdrawn from their associates and followers, Christianity had to prove its own authority by reasonable persuasion, and to gain its converts henceforth by such gifts of the Spirit as holiness in the heart made manifest in the life ; tokens of intervention from above little less marvellous than miracles ; impressively demonstrating, that the Saviour, though withdrawn from the sight of sense, was still abiding with his genuine disciples. During the same period the books of the New Testament were gradually collected into one volume ; such as were spurious being carefully excluded. And the risk of error, which cannot but attach to oral teaching in lapse of time, was obviated, by this



establishment of a standard of reference, an explicit oracle of divine truth, to which Christians in all times might have access ; and one which they agreed to uphold and consult, as final on every question which it purported to solve ; at once genuine, and authentic, superhuman, and infallible.

Whilst the number of professing Christians was thus rapidly increasing, sundry elements of corruption were stealthily creeping into the enlarged community, and growing with its growth. They who sought to gain converts, and this was every believer's duty, were naturally tempted to make some compromise of the truth they had to teach, for the sake of softening the prejudices and winning the assent of those whom they addressed. Converts, when gained, were naturally apt to introduce some taint of their former errors into the community of their adoption. The Jews, everywhere dispersed, supplied everywhere accessions to a religion which acknowledged their own to be divine ; and which had their dearly cherished sacred books so interwoven with those of the New Testament, that both must stand or fall together. But Jews were disposed to judaize ; and with judaism came a tendency to supersede faith by sense, spirit by form, heart devotion by rites and ceremonies. The Gentiles, who formed the bulk of the ever enlarging community, contributed their full share of corruption ; not merely as being votaries of sensuality, addicted to the exclusive admiration and pursuit of this world's objects and enjoyments ; but also by introducing the philosophy of Greece, on the one

hand, and on the other, the speculations of Gnostics from the East, concerning the ascendancy of an evil principle in everything material, and hence the merit of torturing the body, whether by fasting, or by flagellation, or by perseverance against all impulses of natural affection, in a self imposed celibate life. There were other sources of corruption, common to Jew and Gentile, introduced largely by their means into the Christian system. Such was a separation of the ministers of religion from the people, as if belonging to a distinct tribe or caste; such was a taste for sumptuous temples and temple services; for richly decorated temple furniture and vestments; and such was a craving for attractive pomps and processions, in which all could take part, coupled with a superstitious reverence for some supposed secret mysteries, which appertained to the initiated few. Meanwhile the persecution to which converts were always liable, recurring at uncertain intervals, and with variable severity, whilst it could not but conduce to sincerity in profession of the new faith, was by no means so likely to promote in those professing it sobriety of mind, or humility of heart. It must have put these graces to a sore trial, for one dwelling amongst polytheistic idolaters to be enlightened by the knowledge of the one true God who is a spirit, and to feel raised to the level of the most exalted of his fellow creatures, by a salvation sufficient for the worst of men, and needful for the best, offered freely to all, by a high and holy One, with whom was no respect of persons. Men suddenly impressed with these elevating convictions, and pre-

pared to hold them and avow them at the risk of death, were not unlikely to live in a state of somewhat unhealthy excitement. And it is not to be wondered at, however much to be deplored, that amongst the multitude fierce fanatics often took the lead; or that even those who were better qualified to act as guides, by office and education, were under the influence of a heated imagination, as appears in their writings now remaining, rather than of calm judgment and common sense. There is one painful illustration of this state of things in the historical fact, that there arose during the first three centuries more heresies, as they were called, than in any three that ensued afterwards.

The name Heretic, it is to be observed, was given usually to the propounder and the adherents of strange theories, and of wild speculations, concerning divine mysteries not sufficiently revealed in Scripture to admit of precise human definition; mostly glimpses of things heavenly, which could not but be given incidentally, in the process of teaching man from heaven his faith, hope, and duty, whilst on earth. The professed believers in a gospel of peace and love divided themselves into sects, calling each other heterodox, and carrying on their controversies with bitter animosity, by reason of divergencies of opinion concerning questions, whereof many were of little practical importance, and many admitted of no possible solution. And whilst the line of demarcation was strictly enforced between those who held dissimilar opinions, there was no corresponding distinction

maintained between right and wrong doers; no like severance between those who were faithful to their calling, and those who gave little or no heed to it. Both were counted alike as accessions to a community, which now preferring for the most part the outward to the inward, had changed the terms of admission to Christ's discipleship; often neglecting the essential point of mental and moral training, or teaching error in the place of truth, and applying the rite of baptism outwardly, as if men, women, and children could be transformed into Christians, simply by means of a ceremony performed. Hence it came to pass, that a large proportion of those who openly took the side of Christianity, at no small personal risk, were ill instructed in its principles, and were still less imbued with its true spirit. And whilst there must have been many who were sincere in their convictions, zealous, devoted, and self sacrificing; few if any were wholly untainted with such pernicious departures from the truth as the following:—That all presbyters were sacrificing Priests,—That bishops ought to be lords over the clergy and the flock,—That celibacy was the highest eminence of sanctity, and was especially incumbent on the bishops and the priesthood,—That martyrs and their sepulchres and relics were proper objects of a homage nigh to adoration,—that images and pictures might be used with advantage as helps in devotion,—that pious frauds were expedient in the interests of the church,—that baptism, although appointed for admission to discipleship might be postponed by disciples to the hour of death, as a

sure means of making all safe at the last,—and that the Lord's Supper, instituted as a feast of thankfulness, and love, and spiritual refreshment, ought to be received fasting, and approached with abject fear, as involving some so called "dreadful mysteries." In fact the church, in the persons of its ministers, and in the performance of functions of their own devising, was fast encroaching on the prerogatives of the Saviour, was ignoring the hidden work of the Holy Spirit, and was obliterating the character of "a holy priesthood," assigned by Scripture to all true believers in common. In this adulteration of truth by falsehood, in this mixt multitude of believers and mere professors, we see little likeness to Christ's true kingdom here on earth. But neither yet do we herein discern Christendom properly so called. For Paganism was still the state religion; and Heathendom, when on the eve of its most signal discomfiture, was concentrated in the most powerful of all nations. This Heathendom however was permeated by a faith antagonistic to its Paganism, and one which even when grossly corrupted was infinitely its superior. It occupied the throne of empire, but its days were numbered; its destroyer was bred within itself. Even beneath the form of imperial Heathendom might be discerned the future Christendom in Embryo.

The origin of Christendom, as it has existed during more than fifteen centuries, has thus been traced to the original promulgation of the Gospel. The ascendancy amongst the nations, so soon achieved, so long maintained, must be ascribed to

the divine truth of that system of religion, which it professedly adopts, and from whose Author it derives its name. And the corruptions of primitive truth, tainting more or less a large proportion of its members, fully account for that degeneracy, in respect to the faith and practice of a Christian, which has been ever stamped visibly on Christendom, from the hour when it started into a definite existence, on the profession of Christianity by the masters of the world. The like had been the case in the dispensation of the Old Testament, which indeed is in many things a foreshadowing of the New. Therein was set forth a kingdom of God, a theocracy, under laws adapted to secure for the people of Israel, as called out from all others, an exceptional amount of peace and of prosperity, consequent on their being true to their calling, and faithful to their King. Their history, corresponding like that of Christians, with the prophecies concerning them, is for the most part one of wilfulness and waywardness, of shortcomings and abominable transgressions; and likewise of their penal sufferings, including a captivity of which memorials are still extant, and a dispersion of which every Jew we meet with is an instance. Now these things cause perplexity to many who think seriously; being supposed to indicate something not unlike to failure, in the plans of Him by whom all things are ordered. Let it be observed therefore here, that in any such speculations man forgets his own place in the universe, and is guilty of abusing the faculties he is entrusted with. Of

all the attributes of humanity, there is not one in which the likeness of the creature to the Creator is more marvellous, than that power to exercise his will in choosing, of which every individual is conscious in himself. And the subordination of these countless human wills, to the sovereign will of Him who gives to each its independent existence, is not the least inscrutable of those secrets in the realms of thought, which, the more men think of them, are felt to be all the more beyond their grasp. And yet this independency of each individual's will, though it cannot but imply some power of contravening the will that is supreme, seems essential to the constitution of beings capable of obeying their Maker purposely, and of loving Him freely and devotedly. Hence the possibility of those results, which men rashly regard as failures in the counsels of eternity ; even although the very volume in which they are recorded shews them to have been foreseen, foretold, or provided for. Hence the fall of Adam in Eden. Hence the falling away of Israel. Hence the instances of ambition, covetousness, sensuality, and vain glory, noted in the apostolic records. And hence also it came to pass, that the apostles had scarcely finished their work on earth, ere the form and character of the future Christendom were beginning to be moulded, through the corruption of apostolic Christianity by its admixture with worldly motives and devices.

Let this difficulty then be fairly stated and encountered in the present stage of the work in hand, once for all. It amounts to this, that man is not omniscient ; or rather, that his intellectual powers,

though large, are strictly limited, and are infinitely little when arrayed, as in all such questionings they are, in contrast with the wisdom of the most High. Man rarely discerns more than one side of any truth at a time. Man can never see the end from the beginning. Neither can he know anything about the world of spirits, beyond that which has been clearly told him thence. It is for us then to receive with reverence and thankfulness that which God has shown us of his dealings with our race; in order to teach us who He is, and what He would have us to be and do. That in the revelation thus graciously vouchsafed to us, the human will is often seen to clash with the divine, is no more than we experience daily in ourselves. That evil hence ensuing should often for a season prevail against good, and should be permitted to do so unexplained for ages, this, instead of tempting frail mortals to doubt, and to object, might rather lead us to reflect, that a thousand years are but as one day with Him who holds the keys of all the mysteries surrounding us. And if anything could silence our vain questionings, and solemnize our reflexions on the ways of the Most High, it would be the thought of how much has to be set right, and how strict an account all will have to render, "at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in his times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen."

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTENDOM ; ASCENDANT, AND IMPERIAL. CENTURY 4.

THE decline and fall of Heathendom, and the ascendancy of Christendom in its stead, took place gradually, between the beginning of the fourth century and its conclusion. Heathendom, or the dominion of Heathenism, culminating in the empire of Rome, had in the plenitude of its power persecuted Christians as well as crucified Christ; had laid waste Judea, had razed Jerusalem to the ground, and had fulfilled the doom of the Jews by their dispersion. It was now in its turn to be overthrown by Christendom, or the dominion of Christianity; which was itself already somewhat judaized, and yet more paganized. The crisis of this momentous revolution was the adoption of the Christian name and profession by Constantine, about the time of his becoming emperor. This great change in the individual, like that in the population of the empire, was a process occupying some time, in point of fact; according to any test that can be adopted for deciding a question so obscure, as the conversion, formal or real, of the imperial proselyte. Whether indeed Constantine ever was a real convert is known

only to Him who knows the hearts of all. But so important were the consequences of his professed accession to the cause of Christianity, affecting both the pagan empire, of which he became sole master, and the character of the Christendom which by his means sprung into ascendancy, that it becomes needful to inquire, in what sense he ever was entitled to the name of Christian, and in virtue of what proofs of discipleship he has been commonly regarded as a most illustrious convert to the faith of the Gospel. Be it remembered then what the Gospel is :—Glad tidings of salvation, from sin, for sinners ; from the guilt, power, and penalty of sin, for every child of fallen man. Be it remembered, that this gospel calls on all men everywhere to repent ; addressing all as evil doers, and requiring all to experience a great change in heart and life ; themselves thereto consenting, and therein working together with the Holy Spirit working in them and by them that which is good. And further be it remembered, that besides repenting, it was enjoined on all to believe ; to believe this Gospel, and to believe in Him of Whom it testifies ; to have not only faith in this salvation, but also fidelity to this Saviour, a fidelity to be proved by love single hearted, and by obedience unreserved. Bearing these things in mind, and trying by this test the character of Constantine, as disclosed in his actions, from the time of his adopting the name of Christian till his death, we shall be prepared to form a just conclusion as to the sense in which he was a convert to the Gospel. And at the same time we shall plainly see, what sort of

a Christianity it must have been, that passed for genuine in Christendom, at the commencement of its era; when such a convert as this celebrated emperor was hailed as the consummation of its triumph.

There is no evidence, that either when Constantine declared himself a convert, or at any later period of his life, he was ever duly instructed in the essential points of his calling as a Christian. And it is past question, that in regard to the other requisite of discipleship, the outward sign and pledge of his commencing a new life, he purposely postponed his baptism until the time came that he must die. These two circumstances make it hard to admit the notion that he ever was a Christian properly so called, during the whole of his long and prosperous reign. Rather he ought to be regarded as a convert to secondary Christianity. And secondary Christianity is derived from that which is true and primary; just as moonlight really comes to us from the sun; though so attenuated by reflexion from our satellite, and so liable to be obscured by clouds and vapors born of earth, as to be of little use, and to have no glory, in comparison with the light of day. A few particulars in Constantine's eventful history will make it manifest, that the Christianity which he actually adopted was of this secondary and defective quality; wherein the motives, aims, and principles of this world preponderate over those of the world to come. It must certainly be regarded as a suspicious circumstance, that when he was contending for the throne of the

empire, there was reason to think that it might conduce to his success, if he could gain the support of the Christian part of the population. And it is undeniable, that his declaring himself one of that body did at once attach to his cause large numbers of the most intelligent in all quarters, including a great accession of military force. The doubt thus thrown on the purity of his motives, in professing himself a convert, is strengthened by the clear proof he gave in after life of his being actuated by the most unscrupulous ambition. Of such ambition there can be no more certain sign, than the intense jealousy, with which despots in general, and particularly those who have achieved greatness by artifice or arms, look upon any thing like popularity attaching to their subordinates, or to those who stand nearest to the throne. Few, however, and they amongst the chief objects of universal execration, have so sacrificed every feeling of humanity, every principle of morality and religion, to the gratification of this morbid passion, as the first Christian emperor of Rome; who scrupled not to put to death his own first born son, on the bare suspicion that he might probably be induced to prove a rival to his father.

But the motives of Constantine in his conversion, and the tenor of his life as a professor of Christianity on the throne, concern us mainly in connexion with the extensive influence which his conduct in this capacity could not fail to have on the hitherto depressed religious community, just recovering from one of its most severe persecutions, which he thus

openly adopted for his own. His position as sole master of the Roman world, at that particular crisis, was such, in reference to this influence on the community of Christians, as probably no other human being ever occupied. The corruption of apostolical Christianity, however rank, and far spread; and deep rooted, not having got the stamp of long prescription in its favor, could not have been yet wholly beyond the reach of a sound and thorough reformation. The power of the Roman emperor over his subjects had no known limit. The influence of his example must have been incalculable. And considering what outrages and atrocities had been perpetrated by some of those who wore the purple, under the conviction that there was no one to call them to account; and considering also how the people had been long used to the most awful outbreaks of wilfulness and selfishness in their masters; we may conceive how very great might have been the change for good, wrought by any one of them, on the whole frame of existing society, had he faithfully done his duty, as a subject of Christ, whilst wielding the sceptre of the empire. Had he referred to the Christian Scriptures, as in duty bound, for his direction, he would indeed have found it written of "the magistrate," that he "beareth not the sword in vain." But he would have found himself wholly debarred from using it, after the fashion of his predecessors, for the slaughter of those who provoked his jealousy, or who thwarted his ambition. He would have met with ample warrant for inflicting punishment on

convicted evil doers, but none for wreaking vengeance on those who incurred his personal displeasure, or presumed to differ in opinion from himself. Moreover there were within his reach certain words of the divine Teacher, which might seem as if recorded on purpose for his case ; so precisely do they point out the line of conduct which would become a Roman emperor turned Christian : “ The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.” It seems incredible that those who were bound to teach the imperial proselyte should never have brought under his notice these words of superhuman authority, and have charged him to observe them faithfully. Had he done so, had he but kept this one commandment of the Saviour, not counting it grievous but joyous, he would have been seen exercising his sovereignty in divesting it of its despotic attributes, and of all the pomp and pageantry surrounding it. He would have made it his business, as ruler, to lay aside every prerogative of his crown, that was inconsistent with the welfare of his people. It would have been his ambition to be in labours more abundant than his subjects, as their minister ruling them for their good. He would have redressed, as far as in him lay, the wrongs of ages in the state, and those of several generations in the church ; discouraging all wasteful luxury, discountenancing all profitless controversy ; treating all men as his fellows, and especially regarding

those of the household of faith, wheresoever he could discern them, as brethren in Christ Jesus ;—that King of kings, in whose kingdom he would have been content to be a subject, and to the furtherance of whose glory he would have unreservedly sacrificed his own.

But the position of one who felt himself to be the autocrat of the world is so wholly out of the line of ordinary mortals, that it may be deemed fanciful thus to lay down the principles on which Constantine ought to have acted the emperor, in consistency with his profession as a Christian. This however we know with certainty, that he, above all other men, could do in the world beneath his sway exactly what he liked. And further we know, in many matters of great import, both what he did and what he left undone. He must certainly be allowed credit for encouraging by his edicts the emancipation of slaves, for prohibiting infanticide, for proscribing all cruel and licentious exhibitions, and for promoting the observance of the Lord's Day, calling it however by its heathen name of Sun's Day : all these being steps far in advance of heathen legislation, but proving nothing in the law-giver personally beyond the influence of secondary Christianity. As for himself he laid down no one of his imperial prerogatives ; not even those which attached to him as Pontifex Maximus, or High Priest of the Paganism he had renounced. On the contrary, he labored diligently to consolidate by policy the dominion he had gained by force of arms ; organizing the whole empire afresh, institut-

ing a new division of provinces; a new gradation of civil governors, new ministers, and new modes of oppressive taxation ; together with new court officers, and court ceremonies, including various new orders and titles of aristocracy, and a sort of table of precedence, with rules prescribing how each order was to be addressed ; reserving for himself the arrogant style of " Your Eternity." He put the army on a new footing, with a new staff of generals commanding under him, adopting new standards emblazoned with the cross, and referring to Christ in his proclamations as the Giver of victory in battle, rather than as the Saviour from sin and death. He founded a new city for the metropolis of the empire, calling it after his own name ; a monument to his vain glory which has lasted to the present time. And if he allowed no pagan worship to be set up in Constantinople, no temple to be built therein except for Christian services, he gave reason for thinking, that this exclusive favor was shewn to Christianity, chiefly because it was the emperor's religion. Certainly he often sought to give it the predominance by methods the very opposite to those which it prescribes. For although he had proclaimed liberty of conscience to his former friends, the votaries of Jupiter and Juno, he soon afterwards connived at their persecution by his subordinates ; and finally issued edicts for their forcible suppression. And all the while he spared neither gold nor patronage, in trying to turn them to his own persuasion. Far from essaying to reform the community which he had joined, he did much, by the whole tenor of his life, to

increase its corruptions, and to fix them on a permanent foundation. Retaining the high priesthood of Paganism, and assuming at the same time the headship of Christendom, and the supreme oversight of Christianity, he helped to assimilate still further two systems, already apt to form an injurious coalition. He constituted a hierarchy of ecclesiastics, corresponding with the gradations of his civilian aristocracy; rising from simple Bishops, through Archbishops, and Metropolitans, up to Patriarchs. He took upon himself to call a General Council of these church noblemen, excluding all other orders of believers, and to preside over them when discussing the most abstruse of mysteries; being himself all the while unbaptized, and thereby disqualified, according to the views held in common by them all, for occupying even the lowest place in their assembly. Nevertheless he conducted himself when there more like a Christian than most of them, in one respect; committing to the flames a heap of written accusations, which they laid before him against one another, and charging them to keep the peace, and to confer together in charity.

Even in this great Nicæan council, comprizing as it did undoubtedly some of the best men and most able of their order, not one single real church reform was inaugurated. Notwithstanding the opportunity coinciding with the emergency, not a step was taken towards rescuing Christianity from its inward bondage to that world, which outwardly it had brought under its dominion. This was the pressing necessity of the times, to root out worldli-

ness from the world as it became Christian, to render Christendom a community not of the worldly minded but of the heavenly minded. This was the object that must have lain nearest to the heart of any member of Christ's true kingdom, one who cared chiefly for furthering the glory of the Lord; if there were any such, as it may be hoped there were some, in that assembly of mitred ministers of the Gospel. But the subject seems not to have occurred to any one. The real cause of the council's meeting was a controversy raging at the time with more than common fury, and involving more than common scandal to the fair fame of Christianity. And the chief result of its deliberations was the passing sentence against Arius and his followers as heretics; a triumph soon afterwards reversed by a preponderance of numbers in his favor for a time; but perpetuated, as it finally turned out, by a word coined for the occasion, which was inserted by the Council into the Creed, purporting to define accurately in man's uninspired language the profound mysteries of the divine existence. This decision was followed up by edicts from the emperor, proscribing Arianism under formidable penalties. Even to harbour the books of Arius was made a capital offence; and as for the books themselves, they were to be seized everywhere, and burnt. Two of the worst features of ascendant Christendom were thus displayed at the commencement of its ascendancy; persecution, and the suppression of free discussion; the secular force applied to punish those who held sincere convictions on speculative tenets, and the same force

applied to silence reasoning on the part of those who aimed at proving the truth of such convictions; the confutation of such reasoning being the only means of proving them to be false, and the party which persecuted being itself as apt to dogmatize as the other. At the same time the adoption of Christianity as the religion of the empire introduced the practice of making proselytes by bribery and patronage, and by intimidating all who ventured to oppose its claims. And above all there was the great emperor himself, seated on the world's loftiest throne, with the cross of Christ upon his banners, and the name of Christian prized amongst his titles, yet purposely putting off till death the pledges involved in baptism, in the hope of making more sure of its advantages; and this, in the face of all his subjects, and in the crisis of their turning from dumb idols to serve the living God; as if he would teach them by his illustrious but most pernicious example, how to profess without practising; how to hold convictions without allowing them to act as motives, how to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season without losing claim to the glories of eternity.

The result was seen in a rush of nominal converts into the community thus perilously patronized, into fellowship with a religion thus grossly misunderstood, as to its having the promise both of this life, and of the life which is to come. And such accessions, welcomed rather for their numbers than their worth, helped to swell the flood of corruption, fast overwhelming truth of doctrine, and holiness of life,

in Christendom now towering in ascendancy. Instead of being Christ's own people zealous of good works, Christians were seen grasping at rank, office, and emoluments, living selfishly in luxurious enjoyment, and grovelling in the lowest pleasures of sense ; with a zest quickened, it would seem rather than blunted, by the consciousness of their being wiser than those who went before them, inasmuch as they knew the true God from false divinities, and felt free to speculate, in the midst of their worldly doings, on the most sublime questions of eternity. As to their own relations with the eternal world, they were for the most part led to think, that these could be settled for them satisfactorily by the ministers of their new religion ; by a priesthood who offered sacrifice in their behalf, and acted as their mediators, whom they requited by gifts of land or money, by building fine churches, and endowing them richly ; offering these things in point of form to the Most High, together with a service of lip worship, and of ceremonial observances. The pure gold of God's Gospel was thus alloyed with man's base devices, by those to whom it had been entrusted, with a special charge to keep it pure, and to give it currency throughout the world in all its purity. It was beaten out by an imperial artificer into a thin leaf of worthless tinsel, and applied to gild the heathen tenor of his life, the vain pomp and pageantry of his court, and the oppressions which his people groaned under in silence, and sought to soothe by the self indulgences left within their reach. As to the style of piety in vogue, few

things were deemed more meritorious, than for a man to desert his wife and to become an anchorite. And a pilgrimage to Jerusalem made by the empress mother, with a gorgeous state retinue, is a specimen of the kind of homage to the lowly Jesus, which was thought to indicate in the mighty of the earth profound devotion to his will. In connexion with this celebrated pilgrimage, we have the legend of the "Invention of the Cross," the pretended discovery of the very instrument of Christ's crucifixion. This appropriate reward, assigned to the devout pilgrim empress, gives us a notion of the kind of objects on which devotees of the highest class, as well as those of the lowest, at that time set their hearts in Christendom.

It is no marvel, that such flagrant inconsistencies between Christianity genuine and secondary retarded the complete conversion of the empire; retaining in the ranks of Paganism for a century longer some of the most intelligent, and several of the most prejudiced of all classes. Nor can it be deemed any disparagement to the Gospel, if in the lapse of a single generation, one of Constantine's relatives and successors, disgusted by the controversial animosities of the Christians, and scandalized by their immoralities, tried to restore the moral code of an expiring Philosophy, and even to replace the heathen gods upon their pedestals. During the reign of Julian, Paganism became once more dominant as the religion of the State. Heathendom was once more in the ascendant, for a brief space, and for the last time. Christians became again subject

to persecution, and Christendom, or the dominion of those who bear Christ's name, was in abeyance. But it was not within man's power, even though he were a Roman emperor, to reanimate the defunct idols of the sense or of the spirit, in their antiquated forms. The enterprise of Julian met with small success whilst he was living, and was cut short by his early death. His best prospect of succeeding lay in the degeneracy of the religion which he endeavoured to subvert. His failure restored Christians to supremacy in the empire, and Christendom to the ascendancy which it has ever since maintained. Ere the close of the fourth century a decree went forth to suppress all remaining vestiges of the ancient superstition. But the growth of Christian superstition was left as free to flourish as before. Julian's failure was a fresh triumph to those whom he had endeavoured to overthrow. They had been fiercely embittered by his apostacy, as they termed it, and they profited little by their brief period of adversity. They were extravagantly elated by the return of their prosperity. And thus they lost this one more precious opportunity for considering their ways, for revising their institutions, and for reforming their lives, in conformity with the Gospel standard. No attempt, of which we have any record, was made, for reconstructing the church, and remodelling its religion, according to the express will of its divine Founder. The fact is that when men have formed a religion for themselves, they like it better than the one given them by their Maker ; which all the while they perhaps acknow-

ledge to be a gift from Him. And they take the liberty of transgressing his commands, on the strength of their paying honor and obedience to their own. The human standard of right and wrong, put on a par with the divine, soon eclipses it in human estimation. And in all such cases, the compromise between falsehood and truth, and that between the flesh and the spirit, keep pace the one with the other. Thus in Christendom imperial the inroads of a degrading superstition were accompanied by the prevalence of a debasing sensuality. And after all that Christians had endured under persecution, with a fortitude based on faith in the unseen, they no sooner had emperors for proselytes, and the legions of the empire for friends, than they proved ready to accept that offer of the Tempter, which He whose name they bare had indignantly rejected, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTENDOM ; EASTERN AND WESTERN. CENTURIES 5, 6.

IN the constitution of Christendom its churches have always occupied a prominent position ; and have had much influence on its character outward and inward. But to view that position in its true aspect is no easy matter ; owing partly to the circumstance, that the word, "church," in its common usage bears several senses, closely connected, and somewhat intermingled, one with another. Putting out of sight the use of this term for the house of prayer, and repudiating its misplaced application to church ministers, as if these were more truly churchmen than those to whom they minister, we note, that in Scripture, the word, "ecclesia," stands sometimes for the whole body of believers in all ages, and of all climes, sometimes for those of one locality, and sometimes for no more than those of one household, or those who meet together in one congregation. In all these cases the word signifies a community of believers, such as believers were at the time when the New Testament was written ; not merely baptized, but also duly taught in all that Jesus had

commanded ; and though not without frailty, failure, or default, yet animated in the main by faith, hope, and love ; dead in Christ to sin, and arisen with Him, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unto a new life of holiness. It is in a sense analogous to this Scriptural one, but far from identical with it, that the word, "church," in this sketch of Christendom, must be generally understood ; the differences, ever to be borne in mind, being these ; first, that in Christendom, an outward rite, or a mere profession, without so much as the least Christian instruction, is usually held to confer church membership ; and next, that secondary Christianity passes for primary. Hence it follows, that the churches of Christendom, having regard to their members in the mass, to their avowed principles and actual conduct, necessarily differ from the communities indicated by the word, "church," in the New Testament, in proportion as the outward sign is unaccompanied by the thing signified, and just as far as the Christianity, which passes current, differs from the Gospel whose place it occupies. It cannot indeed be doubted that in the midst of this degenerate community, there have always been some Christians, who might be justly called members of that body whereof Christ is the Head, living stones in the temple of the Holy Ghost, and again, "the pillar and ground of the truth," "the bride, the Lamb's wife," "the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven." But Christendom, and its churches visible on earth, must be strangely altered from what they ever have been hitherto, ere

they can lay claim with any shadow of justice to such glorious names as these.

In the apostolic churches all the members formed one royal priesthood, with Jesus Christ himself for the High Priest of their profession. This is a feature ever manifest in genuine Christianity, whatsoever view we take of it, namely, that it puts all men on a par, by bringing the lowest into personal communication with their almighty Maker, on the same footing as the highest. Nevertheless for the sake of order, and for the better edifying of all, there were set apart, from the first, ministers, to be helpers of their brethren. This ministry is distinctly recognized in the New Testament; and is described as being a ministry both of teaching and of presiding, both of serving and of ruling. And that this arrangement was not temporary is clearly shewn by the fact, that we have Epistles addressed to two of such church officers, specifying the qualifications most essential for these offices, and enshrined in the sacred volume for all generations. The name assigned to these church officers in general was, "Presbyter," meaning, "elder;" and suggesting that they were selected from among the early converts in consideration of their years or of their gravity. To some of these there seems to have been assigned, from the beginning, a certain oversight over the rest; signified by the term, "Episcopos," or "bishop." But all were strictly forbidden to assume anything like a lordship over their Master's heritage. Rather all were to be pastors of his flock, apt to teach their brethren, and to guide them by

example ; taking precedence not in worldly rank, but in such graces as fidelity to principle, meekness of wisdom, and blamelessness of life. Twice does Paul, in his Epistles, charge them to be "gentle" in their demeanour ; as if aware, how greatly office and power tempt men to be arrogant. And he has left on record a very memorable expression, for the special guidance of all entrusted with church authority ; stating of himself and his fellow-labourers in the ministry, that they had been gentle towards the people to whom they ministered, "as a nursing mother cherisheth her own children." Now all this has been wholly altered in Christendom from the time that it became ascendant ; and was indeed altered to some extent long before. The clergy became a caste, as distinguished from the laity ; one broad line of demarcation being the celibacy imposed upon the former, first by the force of opinion, and in later ages by church law in part of Christendom. Presbyters were regarded as sacrificing priests ; and bishops were deemed successors not of Timothy and Titus but of Peter and Paul. The secular rank, conferred on bishops by imperial decree, helped to swell the exorbitant pretensions of their order engendered by the superstitions of the people. Elected usually by the popular voice, they were looked upon as embodying the will of the whole religious community. They exercised judicial functions, each in his own diocese, and they acted also as treasurers of all funds collected for church purposes ; offices which as time went on tended to enlarge their lordly power, however unavoidable and

unobjectionable comparatively, when they were the pastors of a poor and persecuted flock. Thus whilst the church was growing up within the empire, as a highly privileged corporation, largely endowed by the state with riches and with lands, the bishops were rising in the church to be its heads and representatives, temporal and spiritual; assuming a power over the other clergy and the laity, for which they held themselves accountable to no man. Nor was it long before the higher members of an order thus unduly exalted were tempted to use their unwarrantable prerogatives, in contending for the mastery, by means the most unjustifiable, sometimes with kings and emperors, and sometimes with each other.

It has been seen how the conversion of Constantine, following that of many of his subjects, and followed by that of many more, raised Christians to the supreme power in the empire; thereby giving birth to the Christendom of which we are endeavouring to form a just conception. Second only to that momentous revolution, which took effect during the fourth century, were the changes consummated during the two centuries next ensuing; in respect of influence on the state and character of the Christian community. Of these changes, the two most notable were, first, the division of the empire itself into the eastern half and the western, effected in point of time somewhat previously; and, secondly, the hostile immigration of the Teutonic and other tribes, followed by their triumphant establishment in the western half; whose emperor they de-

throned in the middle of the fifth century, and with whose population they became amalgamated ere the close of the sixth. Each of these two great events tended largely to confer additional state power on the higher orders of church rulers. And in proportion as the thrones of bishops and patriarchs became objects of worldly ambition, the tide of worldliness which these heads of the church, as they were deemed, ought to have been foremost in withstanding, flowed ever higher and further, throughout that seething mass, half civilized half savage, half Christianized half pagan, which constituted the Christendom of the times.

The division of the Roman empire into two was facilitated by its having two capitals, and two predominant languages, one appropriated to each capital; and was hastened by its wide extent, and the great difficulty of governing it as one, in the degenerate condition of that ruling race which had achieved its union. This division might have made each half by its concentration more powerful than the unwieldy whole; but did in fact enfeeble both. For in neither was any adequate revision of its institutions attempted at the time. And when a peril of the greatest magnitude beset them both, their mutual jealousies effectually prevented any cordial cooperation for defence. This peril came somewhat suddenly, and from an unexpected quarter. The imperial race of Romans, enervated by the luxuries which their victories had procured for them, filled up the ranks of their legions with mercenaries, chiefly enlisted in the regions border-


ing on the empire northwards; men more able or more willing than themselves, to bear the weight of their armour, and endure the hardships of their military service. Such recruits, when they had served their time, took back to their warlike tribes not only the Roman discipline and arms, but also reports of the riches and conveniencies, abounding in the delightful climates of Italy and Greece, and generally on the shores of the Mediterranean. Hence the children of those, who had served as Roman legionaries, became devastators of Roman provinces, conquerors of Roman legions, and finally triumphant occupiers of more than half the Roman empire. The onslaught of these rough warriors, followed by the migration of their families and tribes, fell with its chief force on Gaul, Italy, and Spain. And as Visigoths, and Vandals, Franks, Huns, Saxons, and Ostrogoths, followed in each other's tracks, and spread their hordes in every direction, the Western Empire collapsed under the blow; its line of emperors came to an end; Rome itself was several times taken and sacked; and the Romans became the subjects and the serfs of those, whom they still accounted for barbarians.

But these barbarians brought with them good qualities of their own, tending to balance the loss and humiliation which they inflicted on the vanquished, once the masters of the world. The infusion of their fresh blood gave a vigor to the amalgamated communities of the West, which has enabled them, from that time to the present, to leave the stagnant East far behind them on the

whole, in those arts, both of war and peace, in which the civilized surpass the savage portion of mankind. And on Roman Christendom, considered in its religious aspect, the effects produced by their influx and ascendancy were manifold and great. Even whilst heathen, many of them objected to bow down to images; and many held that the great Spirit of the universe ought to be worshipped under the skies of his own making, rather than to be conceived of as dwelling in temples made by man. Not a few of them were already Christians by profession. When serving in Rome's legions they had heard of the new and marvellous religion; and had carried home with them the glad tidings of a Saviour, more or less adulterated. The Goths especially had enjoyed the unspeakable advantage, of having a version of the holy Scriptures made for them, in their own tongue, by their native bishop, Ulphilas;—a name ever to be remembered with honour,—a work of which large portions still exist, and which set an example rarely followed until the present century. Probably the proportion of real Christians to such as were merely nominal was as great among the Goths as among the Romans. And in the invading tribes generally there were perhaps as many who called themselves Christians, in proportion to avowed pagans, as in the whole mixt population of the empire. But they were for the most part Christians of the same faulty type; infected with the like tendency to accommodate their new convictions to their old practices. And even if not influenced in their conversion by the worldly supe-

riority of Christendom, their conduct as its aggressors, and its spoilers, evinced, that they were not consistent disciples of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless they accounted themselves adepts in the deepest mysteries of the subtle controversy then distracting the whole Christian community. And as many of them as were Christians by profession were bigoted followers of the persecuted Arius. Being victors in the field of battle these proud Heretics, as the vanquished accounted them, were little disposed to brook contumelious correction in their theological speculations. And making up by physical force for what they might lack in logical subtlety, they shed the blood of their fellow Christians, in pitched battles, for the settlement of a dispute, which neither the canons of a council, nor the severe edicts of an emperor, had availed to lay at rest. Ill must it have fared with real practical Christianity, when the most inscrutable mysteries of the faith were submitted to the arbitration of the sword. And of little value would be the decision of such questions ultimately arrived at, if it had no better ground than the sanction of a majority, made up largely of fighting fanatics, and fluctuating during centuries from one side to the other.

Meanwhile if controversies were sore evils, not admitting of cure by wager of battle, the remedy sought in councils at this period proved usually worse than the disease. Discussions the most frivolous on topics the most sacred and sublime, speculations of the finite creature concerning the being of the infinite Creator, a blind groping after



knowledge of that which had not been revealed, whilst that which had been plainly written was ignored or contravened,—this was no edifying spectacle to be presented in the sight of Christendom, as it often was during these two centuries, by the assembled bishops of the East and of the West. These dignitaries were little affected by the great catastrophe, which brought ruin on so many classes in the Western portion of the empire. In many respects they rather gained by it than lost. The conquerors, when heathen, had been used to regard their priests with a superstitious veneration; which they readily transferred, as the conquered had done before them, to the ministers of the Gospel, now become a priesthood and a hierarchy. Hence it followed, that when a territory was ravaged by invading hosts, its pastors, and their fields and homesteads, escaped pillage and ill usage. When a city was taken by storm, its bishop was not only treated with respect himself, but oftentimes was made arbiter of the fate of others; securing the homage of both parties in the strife. And thus in the overthrow of other recognised authority, church rulers found free scope for securing and enlarging their own. This was notably the case at Rome, and with the Roman bishop, the Patriarch of the West. In the deposition of its emperor, the see of its bishops became a post of supreme power, secular and civil, as well as ecclesiastical. The possession of this lofty throne was indeed contended for eagerly as if it were an imperial one, by the ambitious spirits of the age. Their partizans sometimes fought for

them with such fury, that not only the streets, but even the church pavements, were stained with the blood of the combatants. And whilst some of these mitred ministers of the Gospel were promoted to their sees, and also wrought for their elevation, by the free use of sword and spear, others were selected rather for their skill in furthering the like objects by policy; men mighty in the art of wresting Scripture for the support of the most extravagant of their worldly pretensions. With the terrors of the unseen world at their command, they thought to gain honor for the name of Jesus, by claiming for themselves despotic power, and by browbeating their earthly sovereigns. They adopted even towards emperors the degrading custom, introduced from the East by Diocletian, of presenting the foot instead of the hand to be saluted. The title of Pope was also borrowed from the East; where most of the patriarchal thrones set up by Constantine were soon thrown down by the heresies of their occupiers, and by the decrees of councils against heretics. Amongst the few remaining, those at Rome and at Constantinople stood preeminent; the latter seated in the new Eastern capital, overshadowed by the presence of a throne imperial, the former, under no like restraint, in the great original metropolis of the empire. In the long continued strife between these rival church potentates, the emperor tried in vain to divide the victory, by styling one the Catholic Patriarch, and the other the Catholic Pope. But the Pope of Rome would acquiesce in no such compromise. Stage by stage he assiduously built up

the towering fabric of his own sole supremacy ; supporting it by a series of fictitious allegations ; such as that Peter was the Prince of the apostles, and was also the first bishop of Rome, and that therefore the Pope, as his successor in the see, must be the heir of his apostolical principality.

Whilst a spiritual despotism of gigantic proportions, involving supreme secular authority, was thus steadily growing up in the high places of the Western Church, the lower orders of the clergy, if but loyal to the pretensions of their superiors, were left at liberty to advance their own like interests, by like means, according to their opportunities. And the people, ill informed as to the bare facts of Christianity, untrained in its principles, and strangers to its spirit, formed the bulk of a Christendom, in which Christ seemed to bear no sway, and his Gospel to have little if any influence. Some there must have been everywhere, who in the midst of wars and fightings sought for peace ; who in the fall of thrones, and the sack of cities, and the ruin of great families, saw the vanity of things temporal, and were disposed to set their hearts on things eternal. And with the pages of the Bible not yet forcibly closed against them, such must have often found therein a peace which this world could not impart, and a pathway to the mansions of eternity. But it must be remembered, that when the only books were costly manuscripts, and when the art of reading was confined to few, the Bible was rather a standard for the guidance of teachers, than a handbook for the direction of all

in common. And the precious truth which it contained was thereby constantly exposed to the risk of being distorted, colored, or suppressed, according to the prejudices or the interests of those who had it to dispense:—a consideration, which directs attention, in this attempt to pourtray Christendom, to its churches and its church officers, more than would be otherwise needful or desirable.

It must be admitted, that much as secondary Christianity fell short of its pure original, throughout this period, yet something was gained to society by the mere existence of a power purporting to be spiritual; before which brute force bowed in lowly submission, and which, though tainted with many heathen superstitions, was free from some of the worst abominations of rank heathenism. That the rest of the Lord's Day was secured by law was of great advantage to all classes. Something was gained also by the mitigation of the state of slavery, and the gradual substitution of serfdom, and of free labor. And much was gained by the enactment of a code of laws, under Justinian; which, with all its faults, did practically secure one chief end of civil government, a ministry of justice, far better, beyond all comparison, than the undigested mass of statutes, edicts and decisions, which it superseded. But there was one great social evil for which no law could provide a remedy, the prevalence of a most unnatural and unscriptural conviction, that celibacy is an indispensable element in the higher degrees of Christian holiness. In this pernicious notion all the evils of a caste dis-

tion were involved. The married counted it waste labor to strive after a proficiency, from which it was held that they had debarred themselves by marrying. Moreover with the celibacy of the clergy there came in unavoidably suspicions of their immorality. With it came also the accumulation of property, in the hands of those who were continually receiving it, without having children amongst whom they must distribute it. And besides the ministers of the Gospel, there was an ever increasing multitude of ascetics, male and female, mostly shut up in convents, and pledged to celibacy; whereby society was deprived of many who might have been its most useful members. Was any one little apt to delight in war? what so obvious a resource for him as to become a monk? Was any one impatient of oppression, longing for a quiet life of industry, with perhaps some taste for the pursuit of knowledge, then attainable only under difficulties not now easily conceived? what so natural as to take refuge in a cloister? There books would be accessible; and there the taskmaster had no admission. But within those peaceful precincts were living homeless, and were buried childless, many who might have been the happy parents of a progeny, more likely than those who filled their places in Christendom, to "beat their swords into ploughshares," and to aim at leading "a quiet life in all peaceable godliness."

A great Roman historian has left on record an interesting account of the home virtues, realized by the barbarians of Germany, in the times of the

early emperors ; setting forth the manly hardihood and the conjugal fidelity of the husbands ; and the constancy and devoted affection of the matrons, exemplary as wives and mothers, as nurses, and as counsellors. That the homes of these very tribes, and of others like them, when transplanted across the Danube and the Rhine, should fall far short of the faithful portrait drawn by Tacitus, is a lamentable illustration of the degenerate state of Christendom in the West ; where society is described, by Christian writers of the times, as a sink of iniquity, and the civilized Romans are exhorted to take example in morality, from their barbarian conquerors. Indeed so general was the decay of all true virtue, and so terrible were the visitations of famine and of pestilence, ensuing on the waste of warfare and on the prevalence of vice ; that there were not wanting many, who ascribed the excessive wickedness and wretchedness of the times to the substitution of the new religion for the old. And one of the most able of the Fathers wrote his celebrated treatise, “The City of God,” on purpose to confute this allegation ; which work however describes not Christendom as it was, but as the writer conceived it might have been ; a Christian Utopia, an ideal Christendom, not free from some of the prevailing misconceptions of the time, but far superior both to the real Germany of Tacitus, and to the Christianity then actually in vogue.

As to the Eastern half of Christendom, this was in comparison but slightly affected, by the inroad of the tribes which took possession of the Western

half. As an empire it was tenacious of life, but remained stationary and stagnant in the manner of its existence; defending itself against force by craftiness, great in artifice rather than in arts or arms, and hoarding for future ages the literature of the past, without turning it to any good present purpose. As a church, it spent its whole strength on controversies ever more and more fruitless, and lavished its zeal on superstitions ever less and less corresponding with its pretensions as the supremely orthodox community of Christians. Its heretics were assuming the consistency of regularly organized dissident bodies; implacable in their animosity, and furious in their contests, with each other, and with their common parent. Its monks, and other ascetic devotees, were usually of a contemplative turn, after the fashion which still prevails in Eastern Heathendom; as compared with the more active habits of the West. But however torpid in regard to action, they might well defy the competition of all the world, in the wild excesses of their heated imagination. Perhaps the climax of human folly, if it were not also something worse, was reached in the noted instance of Simeon Stylites, and of the Pillar Saints who followed after him for some centuries. This ingenious self tormentor contrived to spend the last thirty years of his life on the summit of a column; beginning with less than twenty feet of height, but ending with full sixty feet. There apart from all human contact he ate his meals, or rather fasted; taking food only once each week. There he slept; when not en-

gaged in vigils. There he had no need to dress ; for he disdained to change his ragged raiment of rough skins, except when it was worn out. There he performed his perpetual devotions ; chiefly with his body stooping, and his head bowed down even to his feet. There he went through every function of physical life ; exposed to summer's burning sun, and to winter's chilly nights. And there at last he laid him down to die, in all the odour of his sanctity ; admired, alike in life and death, by the world which he affected to despise, consulted on affairs of state by emperors, and revered by the devout as the most eminent of saints. Such was the highest phase of secondary Christianity at that period. Such was Eastern Christendom as the time for its most signal discomfiture drew nigh ; its piety puerile, its manliness effeminate, its wisdom foolishness, its institutions effete ; and its vain pretence of being eminently Christian now ripe for the rod of the chastizer, who was fast growing up to manhood on its borders in Arabia.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTENDOM ; EASTERN, IN THE MAHOMETAN ERA. CENTURIES 7, 8.

EACH successive phase in the character and condition of Christendom may be regarded as the offspring of that which went before ; perpetuating its features, and suffering for its faults. Never was this more manifest than in the revolution which befell the Eastern empire, soon after the close of the sixth century, in the springing up of the Mahometan dominion, and in the establishment of the Mahometan religion, amidst the ruins of the larger half of Eastern Christendom. To the inhabitants of the West it is no easy matter to form a just conception of oriental manners and customs. And in the attempt made in the preceding chapter to pursue the two branches into which our subject is now divided, the details which were familiar in the West, seemed in the East to elude our grasp. We can however discern, in a general way, how great was the decay of all true piety amongst the people called Christians in those parts ; how corrupt the religion which they professed, how debased the life which most of them were leading. The outward form of Christianity might still be seen erect, and

wearing the crown of empire. But its very heart was eaten out of it, by controversies at once frivolous and furious, by practices at once worldly and superstitious. As the means of a present salvation from sin, of a disenthralment from its power, no less than of a deliverance from its guilt, the Gospel was almost, if not quite unknown. As inculcating on believers likemindedness to Christ, and a glad consent to the impulses of the Holy Spirit, it was little, if at all, deferred to. These were forms of truth far too simple and too practical, to dwell in minds that were intent on the metaphysical analysis of Him who made the heavens, minds preoccupied with the task of stigmatizing, in appropriate terms, every shade of opinion differing from their own, concerning the most hidden secrets of God's work in man's redemption. Neither did Christianity fare better, regarded as a rule of practice, amongst these subtle debaters over its doctrines. The emperors were for the most part adepts in the theology of their times. But no one of Constantine's successors on the throne seems ever to have bethought himself, of conforming his acts, in his capacity of Emperor, to the stringent requirements of the New Testament. No Cæsar Augustus did in effect lay his sceptre at the feet of Jesus, and crown Him Lord of all. This would have involved self denial, self humiliation, self sacrifice; a free subjection of the human will to the divine, an affection weaned from things temporal, and fixed on things eternal. Of graces such as these we may hope that even then there were some bright instances existing in the East; but it

is hard to discover any vestige of their existence, either amongst rulers or people, in the accounts of those times that have come down to us.

The great antagonist of this degenerate Eastern Christendom was a native of Arabia; a country which, though then almost surrounded by Roman provinces, could boast, that it had never been subdued, either by the Romans, or by any other of the great empires which preceded that of Rome. Its inhabitants were proud of their independence, and of their descent from Ishmael, to which they commonly laid claim, though with how much justice has been doubted. They seem to have had some traditional acquaintance with the God of the father of the faithful; mingled with superstitions which partook of the nature of idolatry. All were warriors; many were also merchants. Amongst them dwelt many Jews, and some Christians; brought into contact with them probably by the pursuits of commerce; for which the situation of the Arabian peninsula offered at that time considerable facilities. Mahomet appears to have had his mind enlarged by his travels as a merchant; and to have had his faculties directed to religious questions by his intercourse with some of the Christian sectaries of the East, especially the Nestorians. His acquaintance with the Old Testament was probably derived from the Jews with whom he had dealings; and to whom he seems to have been chiefly indebted for the striking passages which occasionally occur in the desultory pages of the Koran. The Nestorians would introduce him to Christianity,

according to their own views of it ; but would be sure to give him at the same time the most unfavorable impression of the communion which prevailed in Eastern Christendom ; whose members they would represent as being often driven, by the exigencies of controversy, into the false position of seeming to hold more gods than one. For amongst the epithets, which the orthodox applied to Mary, the mother of Jesus, by way of defining their opinions, and defying their opponents, was "Theotokos," meaning, "mother of God ;" a title obviously open to the above injurious construction. And the Nestorians could be no strangers to an artifice ever dear to controversialists, namely, for one to fasten on the other, conclusions which the other does not hold ; the one declaring that they follow unavoidably from conclusions which the other admits. Certain it is that Mahomet always denounced Christians as both polytheists, or worshippers of many gods, and idolaters, or worshippers of images. And we may give him credit for an honest zeal against both these abominations, at the outset of an undertaking, which was at first apparently most hopeless. His career was brief, his success signal ; his means were simple, and, in part at least, sublime. Within some years from the Hegira, his flight from Mecca to Medina, he had overrun Arabia, and had prepared the way for his successors into Syria, and so onwards even from the extreme East of the Roman empire unto its boundaries in the West ; acting at once the part of Teacher and of Warrior ; enforcing everywhere, at the point of the sword,

with all the energy of the most profound conviction, the unity of the Godhead, and his own commission as the prophet of the Lord. Whether he was sincere in his convictions or not, he effectually succeeded in impressing others with the persuasion of his sincerity. He smote down the feeble convictions of heathendom in Arabia, and of Christendom in the empire, by dint of the sincere purpose which he engendered in his followers. And he wrought with a truth so lofty and so great, that it was able to carry forward the lie which he attached to it; proclaiming everywhere, "God is one God, and Mahomet is his prophet."

Under these two heads, the sublime truth and the gross falsehood thus concurrently announced, it may be well to contemplate this very remarkable revolution; which, within the compass of a few score years, dethroned Eastern Christendom in the greater portion of its realms, and raised to the highest pinnacle of human power, at once secular and religious, the successors of the false prophet, called the Caliphs. Let us consider his gross falsehood first in order, namely, "Mahomet is God's prophet." He was false in giving himself out to be inspired from heaven to reveal a new religion; professing to receive the Bible as of divine origin, but superseding it by a Koran of his own devising, and acknowledging the divine commission of Moses and of Christ, whilst contravening the authority of both. He was a false prophet in enjoining a blind submission to a blind fate; divesting God's providence at once of love and of intelligence, and tending


both to sear man's conscience, and to harden his heart. As false prophet he inculcated a spurious system of morality, and sanctioned it by fictitious rewards and punishments; substituting a sensual paradise, and a carnal hell, for the veiled joys and terrors of holy writ; and in his code of duty placing such acts as pilgrimage and ablution on the same footing with almsgiving and prayer. It was as false prophet that he gave fresh sanction to polygamy; however expressly he found it written in the book he professed to reverence, not only that every man should "have his own wife," but also "every woman her own husband." It was also as false prophet that he upheld aggressive warfare, and represented death in battle as a passport into paradise; in the face of a declaration no less express, that all the wars and fightings of mankind come of lusts warring in their members. And these things he not only urged with fervor as a preacher, but he also exemplified them without scruple in his life; the once sincere and enthusiastic reformer, as at all events he must have esteemed himself at first, degenerating into a merciless voluptuary; pleading special revelations, forged consciously as they must have been, for the indulgence of his own inordinate desires, and propagating his own exclusive creed by the most unflinching slaughter of his fellow-creatures. This last was indeed the most characteristic feature in Mahomet's false claim to the prophetic office, his uniform appeal to the decision of the sword, as the supreme arbiter of its truth. He made no attempt to work miracles, no pretence

to being able to foretell the future. "Believe in the prophetic mission of Mahomet, or die,"—this was the alternative which Islam sternly offered alike to heathen and to Christian. Much of its success must be ascribed to its unscrupulous application of this argument. And whereas it robbed the empire of whole provinces by its incessant and victorious aggressions, it could not fail to provoke Christendom to retaliate. And thus it helped to confirm Christians in their habitual forgetfulness of their Lord's great commandment of love for all men, as well as of his significant warning, that "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

Such were some of the chief evil consequences ensuing on Mahomet's false assertion, that he was the prophet of the one true God. Such was the strange gospel specially taught by this self constituted evangelist, and such his method of teaching it; such the system to which he sought to convert Christendom, and such the means by which he converted no small part of it; thereby subjecting its people at once to his creed, and to his dominion. But his falsehood would never have so prevailed, if working by itself; would never have gained proselytes to fight for it, and martyrs to die for it, except under cover of the great truth which he set in front of it. And in order to judge fairly of Islam as a whole, and of its bearing on the state and character of Christendom, we must take fully into account its persistent antagonism against all worship of false gods or of idols; we must give the prominence which was given by Mahomet himself to the first

half of his proclamation, namely, that " God is one." To this other chief element in his system our attention must now be directed.

The unity of the Godhead is the central principle of all true religion. It is one which commends itself to man's reason, as soon as stated, without proof; dispelling the myths of all false divinities; even as the true solar system, once propounded by the sagacity of a Copernicus, scarcely needed, for the demolition of all previous theories, its demonstration by the genius of a Newton. This great truth, that God is one, announced to Israel in the assurance that Jehovah Elohim, our God, is one God, is the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures from one end to the other. It is proclaimed as connected with the unity of creation, in the first words of the Old Testament; which anticipate the poor devices of accounting for the existence of the universe by fate or by the eternity of matter, by haphazard, or by inexorable law; and solemnly announce, that " In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." By the fiat of the same Holy One, according to the same record, light started into existence, and with it all the correlated forces known to science. The key note of the covenant made with Israel by means of Moses, the first of the ten commandments written in heaven for man's use on earth, runs thus: "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." This is the statute, closely connected with the commandment next to it, for the breach of which the chosen people so often suffered in the times of their Judges, and were carried away into captivity with their kings.



This is the principle which gave to the world wide proclamations of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the vitality of truth ; more efficient in securing their acceptance with “all people nations and languages,” than the most cruel penalties worldly wisdom could devise. This was the ray of light divine that flashed upon the lofty minds of Socrates and Plato, whether by tradition from the East, or by their own superior intuition. This it was which was not far from the men of Athens, in a later generation ; who, in the midst of the splendid temples of their Olympian deities, had an altar made more glorious than all around it, by its dedication “to the unknown God.” It was this doctrine, the distinctive one of the Jews, that gained them proselytes in great numbers, and in various directions, both before and after their dispersion at the fall of Jerusalem. And it is this which is still cherished in their charge, like some precious seed deposited for ages with a mummy in the grave ; to spring up and bear fruit hereafter, at the time appointed for the gathering in of all nations into the kingdom of Christ. In the New Testament the unity of God is assumed everywhere as known, rather than anywhere stated formally. It appears there in such phrases as this, —“none is good but one, that is, God ;” or as this, “God is love.” Such as He is described in this final volume of revelation there could be only One ; a heavenly Father, embracing in his parental care every creature that He has made ; and especially manifesting his interest in the fallen race of man, by watching for the good of every one in each

successive generation, and giving Himself, in the gift of his eternal Son, to be a Saviour sufficient for them all.

Six centuries had scarcely elapsed after this revelation of Himself by the Most High, in the character of Redeeming Love, ere the simple truth of his unity was obscured, and almost hidden out of sight, by the mist of heated disputations over certain particulars in the constitution of his nature, whereof the Scripture gives intimations for our edifying, not for the gratification of our curiosity. In the course of the controversies upon these subjects, the reverence due from man to his Creator was often overstepped, in the eagerness of the disputants for victory, or in their morbid craving for knowledge beyond their depth. And whilst the glory of the great God of heaven and earth was thus encroached upon, there grew up to a greater pitch than ever the habit of paying homage to departed saints, and to angels, and above all to the mortal mother of our Lord. Thus created beings were more and more deified; whilst the glory of the one only Creator was dissected, as into portions, by theological anatomists, who thought by searching to find out God. And but for the success of Mahomet and his followers, there seemed some risk, lest the great truth, that Jehovah Elohim, though triune, is one, should fall into oblivion throughout Christendom, and especially in the East. But now, first Arabia, and soon afterwards all Syria and Egypt and Persia, were reclaimed to the confession of the unity of the Godhead. In vain did the benighted Christians of the

East parade the relics of their martyrs, and the images of their saints, by way of defence from the successive hosts of fierce invaders; whom such spectacles served to animate with fresh fury in their onslaught. Long before the close of the seventh century the tide of Moslem conquest had reached the walls of the Eastern capital on the Bosphorus. Receding thence, after a five years' fruitless siege, it rushed with unabated force along the shores of the Mediterranean sea; staying not till it had overflowed all the northern coast of Africa, and deluged nearly the whole peninsula of Spain. In the course of this triumphant progress, the stern alternative of Islam or death was gradually mitigated. In the case of the heathen it might still be oftentimes enforced. But Christians might compound for life by paying tribute. Amongst Christians the self styled orthodox were the most harshly dealt with; and these, yielding to rigorous compulsion, formed a great majority of the converts. The Christian sectaries, whose separation had arisen for the most part from views less repugnant to the Mahometan monotheism, were treated leniently; as were also, in most instances, the Jews, being descended from the father of that Ishmael with whom the Arab race claimed kindred.

In all these changes of dominion, it is observable, that there was no fusion of races, or of creeds, corresponding with that which ensued on the like catastrophe which had lately befallen Western Christendom. Whatever influence Islam had on Christianity arose not from any amalgamation of

those who held these diverse systems, but from the external action of those who maintained the one upon those who professed the other. The two communities remained for centuries, as will be seen hereafter, confronting each other; conqueror and conquered, oppressor and oppressed; with no tendency to coalesce; but persisting in the habit of calling each other infidels, and deeming each other lost to all eternity. The limits of the Eastern empire were reduced to a small compass by the victories of the Caliphs. And the barbaric splendors of its courts were eclipsed by those of the rival thrones at Bagdad and Damascus. But at the same time the controversies of Eastern Christendom were hushed, and its controversial councils silenced, in the ascendancy of an antagonistic communion, which had the habit of cutting short all discussions with the sword, which was most abhorrent of the polemics in which Christians took delight, and which held so much in common with those whom it had defeated, that it was generally regarded at the time, as it has indeed been since by some, in the light of an heretical Christian sect. But Islam cannot be brought within any definition than can be framed for Christianity, be it ever so comprehensive. The dominion of Mahomet was no part of Christendom. It was by antagonism, if at all, that the one conferred benefit on the other. And it can be little doubted, that Eastern Christendom did derive some real advantage from its humiliation by a power, which put foremost in its battle cry the unity of Allah. This was in fact the one

sole sound article in the creed of Islam ; but it was a fundamental one, and very needful at that time to be enforced. It is indeed true, that as this doctrine was held by Mahomet, and as it was coupled with the falsehood of his own prophetic mission, it was incompatible with the distinctive truth of Christianity, " God manifest in the flesh ;" that it left no scope for the all sufficiency of a Saviour, giving peace to the troubled conscience of a sinner ; that it recognised no superhuman influence of the Holy Spirit, to change the believer's heart, and to sanctify his life ; and that it set forth the divine Being, in his solitary unity, rather to be feared by man, as the minister of Fate, than to be loved, as the loving Father of mankind. Nevertheless the great truth, which Islam, with all its gross imposture in the background, ever proclaimed as first and foremost of its tenets, must have served good purpose, in checking the then growing tendency to polytheistic notions, and to the kindred practices of idolatry ; suppressing them as it did to the utmost of its power, through an extent of empire, withdrawn from Christendom, but containing a large Christian population, which stretched from the river Indus to the shores of the Atlantic.

As to the moral influence of Mahometanism on Christendom, we have seen how infinitely the morality of the Koran falls beneath that which, in the Word of God, is built upon this foundation, " Love is the fulfilling of the law." We have seen how both the teaching of the false prophet, and his example, are condemned by the divine rule of which

he ought to have availed himself; sanctioning, as they did, evils, both in principle and in practice, as great as those which disgraced the system he undertook to reform. But the morality of a community is closely connected with their theology. And the great doctrinal truth, on which the Koran takes its stand, gave a tone and an authority to its moral teaching, however faulty, which is ever wanting where false gods or their graven images are worshipped. When men indulge their own fancies in devising objects of divine homage, they are apt to indulge their own passions with less compunction or restraint, than when they acknowledge the presence, the power, and the majesty of the one living and true God. But whether or not we can trace cause and effect to our satisfaction, we have abundant proof in history, that immorality and idolatry have ever gone hand in hand. And we have been told how, in one signal instance, if not in all, this was a judgment on men for their wilfulness; that "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Thus whilst the morality of Islam compared with that of the Gospel was naught; yet, compared with that of image worshipping Christendom, it might be something. And such as it was, there was an earnestness in the discharge of its obligations by its disciples, which might well put to shame the faint homage paid to the demands of Christianity in the Christendom of the times. A striking illustration of the difference between the two standards of morality, may be derived from

the teachings of such signs and symbols and inscriptions, as men have used in all ages for decorating the temples of their Divinities. Let us compare the lessons taught by a mosque of Allah with those inculcated by the splendid fanes which adorned the capital of the Eastern empire. These latter were dedicated to saints or angels. They were decked with pictures and with images, inside and outside. Their walls were hung with fictitious relics enshrined in gold and precious stones. Their roofs rang with creeds of triumphant controversialists, and with anathemas launched against their opponents. On the walls of a mosque no graven image could anywhere be found; no representation of any creature of God's hand could be met with, to distract the homage of man from his Maker. Over its portals there was sure to be inscribed the great truth that "God is One." And for a specimen of the moral sentiments of Islam, in contrast with those of Eastern Christendom, we may take an inscription copied by Sir William Jones, from the gateway of a mosque, in a small island called Hinzuan, a mere speck in the Atlantic Ocean, on the Eastern coast of Africa;—which runs thus: "The world was given us for edifying ourselves; not for raising sumptuous buildings:—Life, for the discharge of moral and religious duties; not for pleasurable indulgences:—Wealth, to be liberally bestowed; not avariciously hoarded:—And learning, to produce good actions; not empty disputes."

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTENDOM ; WESTERN, PAPAL. CENTURIES 7, 8.

OUR attention is now to be directed to Western Christendom ; which indeed will henceforth occupy the chief portion of space, in this sketch of the dominion of Christianity commonly so called. For not only did the ascendancy of Mahometans reduce that of professing Christians in the East within narrow limits, but moreover this small remainder continued for ages in so stagnant a condition, as to contribute to our portraiture scarcely a single lineament worth noting. And although it reappeared at length in Russia, as the dominant communion of an Empire wide in extent and powerful in numbers, it has not hitherto exercised any corresponding influence on the other half of Christendom. During the seventh and eighth centuries, whilst the Eastern Roman Empire was being thus contracted by the victories of the Caliphs, the amalgamated races, which occupied the Western half, were gradually settling down into distinct kingdoms and nationalities, to which the chief European nations now existing trace their origin, with more or less of certainty. And inasmuch as all purported to be Christian, and all were consti-

tuted on the principle that Christianity was their recognized state religion, we might have hoped to see growing up, and embodied in them, a Christendom that should be really worthy of the name; a brotherhood of nations, in which each nation was a brotherhood of families and individuals, all baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and also carefully taught and trained to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded. Christians of every rank were now free to act a Christian part, faithfully and consistently, in the reorganizing of society, on the basis of the Gospel. Or, if they were not thus free, their rulers might have given them this liberty; and, being themselves Christians, were bound to do so. There was not now, as there once had been, a great imperial persecuting power, to restrain any one from carrying out his Christian principles in the face of day. No fresh barbarian hordes were now swarming over the land in succession, unavoidably distracting attention from the peaceable pursuits of godliness. Even the wars of controversy were in great measure hushed; and the disputed articles of the creed were nearly all settled, with some approach to general satisfaction. Now therefore would have been the time for men to turn their attention to some such practical good end, as the constitution of a social system, in which the welfare of the many should be considered, rather than the enjoyments of the few, in which the most humble should be deemed most noble, and the most loving be honoured as most truly great; in which praise should

wait not on wealth but on worth, and the riches of earth should be valued only as the means of doing good, and of laying up treasure in heaven.

Such, or something like to this, we conceive that Christendom might have been made in that juncture. Such, we maintain, that Christendom ought to have been always. But such it was not at the period now under review, neither has been from that time to this. And yet such is, beyond all question, the kind of society, which the Bible, taken as a whole, the Old Testament fulfilled in the New, sets before us as God's will in man's behalf. It is true that in the Old Testament the reward of obedience proposed to Israel, both nationally and individually, is temporal prosperity. But in that whole volume no encouragement can be found for anything like a selfish exclusive enjoyment of this world's goods, of its riches, pleasures, praise, or power. No doubt there was a diversity of ranks, such as is inseparable from a diversity of character and of conduct. The hand of the diligent would be sure to make rich; whilst the idle and the wasteful would come to want. Then there were the heads of tribes, born princes in Israel, for the furtherance of social order and good government. And there were the priests and levites for the services of the sanctuary; the latter being also useful to the community as teachers and administrators of law. Nevertheless there was no respect of persons in reference to their standing before their one great King in heaven. Before his law all men were equal. In that law it was provided, that every man

should have a portion of land for his own, which portion even the most prodigal could not alienate from their children in perpetuity. And very fearful was the woe denounced by one of the prophets in the Old Testament, against those who so "join house to house, and lay field to field," as to leave no due place or portion for their brethren. Thus the temporal prosperity proposed to Israel did not mean that a few should be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; but that all should have enough and to spare, each "under his own vine and fig tree." And all this was a shadow of better things to come, of a dispensation exceeding in glory, even as things eternal transcend those of time. But the Gospel, in bringing life and immortality to light, discloses fresh motives for the practice of those virtues, which most promote man's wellbeing whilst on earth. Why then has Christendom never aimed at securing the promise of both worlds, in the sense evidently intended in holy Scripture? Why have Christian rulers and their peoples never so much as tried to realize, on a national scale, the reign of Christ here below, in the prevalence of peace, plenty, liberty, and brotherly kindness, enjoyed with thankfulness, in faith, hope, and love, as an earnest of life eternal in the heavens? It is selfishness that has ever been the hinderance. The selfish love of this world, the wilful rejection of a free salvation from the bondage of sin and sensuality into the glorious liberty of the children of God, these have been the barriers which have hitherto ever limited Christ's

kingdom here to a comparatively little flock ; of whom many, it is to be feared, have been first led to set their hearts on things above, by the sorrows and the sufferings entailed on them, through their unavoidable connexion with the disordered state of things on earth. Does then the Gospel proscribe selfishness ? or does it not ? If it does, certainly Christendom cannot stand the test. According to the witness of history, selfishness has reigned supreme, with few exceptions, and these mostly on a small scale, in all its quarters, and in all periods of its existence. And unhappily during the centuries now before us, when Christendom in the West was beginning to assume its present territorial limits and formations, one more opportunity was irrevocably lost, for casting out from its institutions the evil spirits of self indulgence and self aggrandizement, and for rendering itself an embodiment socially, and politically, not merely in a few isolated individuals, of genuine Christianity.

Of all the forms in which the world tempts man to be selfish, power over his fellow creatures is probably the most seductive ; for this reason, amongst others, that it is the most comprehensive, as regards all other gratifications. For he who has most largely his fellow men at his command is able, by their means, to appropriate to himself most abundantly this world's riches, and the pleasures which its riches purchase. Thus it has come to pass, that lordship and kingship have been always the chief objects of man's ambition, and the fruitful sources of man's wars and fightings. And hence wars and

fightings for the mastery formed the principal occupation of the various peoples and rulers, who constituted the Western Christendom of the seventh and eighth centuries. It was as if there were a great seething of the nations; as though the fragments of the broken empire, and the masses of those who in shattering it had lost their own cohesion, were being molten in the oftentimes heated furnace of fierce war; to be cast into fresh moulds, and to take forms, which, though nominally Christian, were but slightly altered from the patterns of the once heathen communities which they superseded. That which had been true of Rome, and of Greece, of Persia, and of Babylon, that "the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them," was true of the kings of Christians at this era, and has been true from these beginnings of Christian kingship down to the present time. Because those who are wholly occupied with the ministry of ruling, for the benefit of the rest, must needs be supported by their tribute, therefore, it has been assumed, they ought to be supported by the most wasteful outlay of hard earned public means on pomps and luxuries. And thereupon they have frequently been tempted to use their power, given them for the good of their people, in taxing them oppressively, for the gratification of their own selfish propensities. And all the while it has usually happened, that the people like to have it so. So fond is man of this world's show and glory, so subtle are the guises under which selfishness holds sway, that subjects generally take a personal pride and pleasure in the worldly state

and grandeur of their sovereigns ; fighting zealously in their quarrels, without reference to the justice of their case ; and eagerly helping, both in person and with purse, to pull down thrones, or set them up, at the bidding of any leader however worthless, whose cause, by espousing it, they have once made their own.

Whilst Christian state rulers and their subjects, were thus engaged in unholy rivalry and warfare, each state seeking to enlarge its borders at the cost of its neighbours, there was growing up to supreme eminence, in the midst of them, a Christian church ruler,—Priest, Bishop, Patriarch, Pope,—claiming to be higher than the highest of them all, and on the road to be soon mightier than the mightiest. Power was the Pope's great object as well as theirs ; power over his fellow men, over his brother Christians. Power secular, arising from the possession of lands, riches, and honors, and displayed in state and luxury, was by no means deemed beneath his notice. But the special prerogative of the Pope, that which it was his chief ambition to establish and enlarge, was power ecclesiastical and spiritual, power in the domain of faith, operating on that of sense ; a dominion over the minds of men founded on their false persuasion of his divine authority, and exercised in controlling, by his own arbitrary will, their opinions, their motives, and their consciences. This great imposture of the Papacy in the West achieved its triumphs, like that of Mahomet in Eastern Christendom, on the strength of a great truth which it professedly up-

held; which in the Pope's case was the verity of the religion of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the New Testament. Great pains had been taken from the beginning to keep the volume of these Christian Scriptures free from all intrusion of spurious compositions. Even the controversies of the early centuries had helped to preserve the text pure, without mutilation or interpolation; each party watching diligently, lest its opponents should tamper with the common standard of reference and truth. But whilst spurious Gospels and Epistles were most scrupulously excluded from the code finally adopted, there was no like security against spurious interpretation. And means were easily found to give a totally false application to the genuine words of Jesus Christ and of his apostles. Sometimes falsehood was added to the truth, on the pretence of a supplementary tradition. Sometimes the truth was robbed of its completeness, by suppressing portions of more or less importance. Then there was the mystical exposition of the fathers; by which a text might be made to mean anything they pleased. And there were also forged documents brought freely into play, and fictitious relics, supplied readily, in proportion to the demand for them, and pretended miracles, which were justified as pious frauds. Each of these forms of falsehood, baneful in itself as being false, was made helpful, under cover of the one great truth which they disfigured, in building up a system of theology and of morality, with the Papacy at the top of all, so false and so faulty, as to render the secondary Christianity of

these ages, and of many that ensued, worse, if possible, than that of those which went before. In the midst of all this gloom, there was indeed discernible some faint light of the true Gospel. We read with especial interest of the venerable Bede in England, of Patrick and Columban in Ireland and in Scotland. We find mention of missions at this time for converting Germany, and of attempts in many quarters to convert Jews. But the saints of these ages were all monks or monk admirers; and these missionaries were more anxious to found convents, and to build cathedrals, than to establish churches of living stones, made up of Christian families. And whether or no they proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they rarely failed to inculcate the supremacy of the Pope. Indeed in this point of view, the men that were most in earnest did most harm to the cause of truth, as working most efficiently for the antagonistic cause of falsehood; even as it may be justly held, that such popes as the courageous Leo, and the politic and indomitable Gregory, entailed on Christendom far more serious injury by their misdirected virtues, than the most flagitious of their successors by the scandal of their vices. And for the purposes of our sketch, all popes may be counted practically as one; all having been representatives of one and the same idea, in itself essentially false, and most pernicious in its effects on Christendom; namely, the supremacy of one mortal man, as priest, and sovereign over the consciences, and thereby over the conduct, of all who passed for Christians; and whose position, in this

respect, had they been Christians indeed, was one of equality with each other and with him, as members of the same royal priesthood.

The claims of the Pope to some sort of sovereignty, both secular and priestly, had been gradually gaining ground in Christendom, ever since the fall of the Western empire. And they were further advanced during the contests which arose out of the partition of the vanquished provinces amongst the conquerors. The policy of these shrewd warriors, no less than their superstition, dictated the most profound homage to the priesthood in general, especially to one who was accounted the high priest of the religion then generally professed. For his was a power never in abeyance, surviving the revolutions on which it rather seemed to thrive than not, and reaching far and wide into the realms of all the combatants; a power whose aid each might well seek to gain, for his own advantage, and to purchase by concessions of corresponding value. Thus the Papacy, which had begun to profit by the success of Alaric, gained afterwards by the conflicts of those who followed after him. It gained also by the success of Mahomet, which humbled the rival patriarchate in the East, and which, encroaching from the side of Spain on Western Christendom, alarmed its rulers, and led them, with a view to their common safety, to resort to Rome as to a centre of union. Even the Lombard kingdom, which at one time threatened Rome itself, ultimately paved the way for the aggrandizement of the Pope. For the Lombards, ere they fell before the Franks, had

wrested the exarchate of Ravenna from the feeble grasp of a distant Eastern emperor; a territory which Pepin, the Frank conqueror, soon afterwards conferred upon the Pope, who had sanctioned his usurpation of his master's crown. And thus the throne episcopal took rank as a throne imperial. And the Pope from that time forth has held his place in the community of European sovereigns; having his court, and his guards, and his taxes to maintain his state; making treaties, and declaring war, and fighting battles; and also executing justice, with all due state formalities; though with no more reference than his brother sovereigns to Christian principles of right and wrong. This territorial sovereignty of the Papacy was effectually confirmed by Charlemagne; who by a series of victories achieved for himself a new empire in the West, at the close of the eighth century; and who was crowned emperor by the Pope at Rome, having himself uniformly favored all the Pope's pretensions. This famous emperor is said to have been anxious to reform some of the most scandalous abuses of the church, and at the same time to promote the study of the holy Scriptures. But notwithstanding, when he had the Pope for his firm ally, and all the Western nations at his command, he effected no appreciable reform in the worldly ways of Christendom, nor even in his own. His Christian subjects lived much in the same fashion, and in the pursuit of much the same objects, as their fathers, when heathen, had done before them. As to their modes of worship, he aided and abetted the Pope in

upholding the use of images in the churches; in opposition to a vehement but ineffectual attack upon that practice, as encouraging image worship, made by rulers of the Eastern empire. And as to their institutions, let it suffice to mention two, which were left to flourish in full vigor for ages afterwards;—the one judicial combat, or the settlement of legal questions, civil or criminal, by wager of battle; the other, the right of sanctuary, or the immunity from arrest which the most atrocious offenders against law enjoyed, provided they could first take shelter within the walls of a church. Justice must indeed have well nigh left this earth for other spheres, when might was recognized, by rulers in church and state, as the proper arbiter of right. And piety must have appeared little better than a mask for villany, when the consecration of a building, for Christian worship, qualified it to screen from legal chastisement the robber, the false witness, and the assassin.

But the power which the Pope wielded as a secular sovereign had only a slight direct influence on Christendom, compared with that which he exercised as the Head of the Western church, the supreme Pontiff over all its bishops, priests, and deacons, in their various gradations, the regulator of all its convents, commander in chief of a whole array of monks and nuns, and the judge, to whose decision all its subordinate authorities were accustomed to appeal as final. His claim to this lofty eminence had grown up slowly but persistently in the course of ages. First the bishop of Rome claimed a

primacy amongst bishops, on the ground that Rome was the metropolis of the empire; although no trace of this claim is to be met with during the first three centuries of the Christian era. Towards the close of the next three centuries there was set up the pretence of the Pope's being the successor in his bishopric of the apostle Peter, there being actually no clear proof that this apostle so much as ever set foot in Rome, but rather a presumption to the contrary; and it being certain that he never claimed to be a prince among the twelve. Much stress was laid, in further support of the Pope's pretensions, on the misinterpretation of a text, which was construed as giving to Peter's successor the power of the keys; in virtue whereof he might admit into the kingdom of heaven, or shut out of it, whom he would. Linked with this fiction was that of Purgatory. Penances, and Private Masses with a view to special benefits, followed not far off; all uniting to yield abundantly both power and profit, to the priests, and through the priesthood to the Pope. But undoubtedly the most fruitful source of priestly and papal power was the practice of private Confession, which during these centuries came fully into use; superseding the primitive usage of confessing sins one to another in the face of the congregation. For by this means the conscience of the penitent was made pliable under the handling of its spiritual director. And in proportion as the priestly caste became masters of the secrets of other men, and guides of their conduct, being at the same time the subser-

vient agents and informants of their own supreme director the Roman pontiff, the power of this potentate, thus maintained, and wielded through an organization coextensive with Western Christendom, was on its way to become supreme over every other, in the things both of this world and of that which is to come.

It is indeed easy to draw a distinction in words, as has lately been the fashion, between allegiance to a spiritual director in things spiritual, and conformity to his direction in things temporal. But they who sincerely think their priest competent to guide them without fail in the pathway to heaven, must surely know as well as other men, that this track cannot but coincide with the path of duty on the earth. And he who has authority to prescribe to them their path of duty, has in fact power to dictate what they ought to do in every relation of life. It is only because men reserve to themselves a right to swerve, when so inclined, from the path prescribed to them, that they can entertain the thought of any such distinction; or imagine that they may obey their priest and submit to their Pope, in spiritual things, but withhold their obedience in things secular. The fact is, that the Pope did undoubtedly, ten centuries ago, claim exactly that power, to which no one but man's Maker has a right, namely, to control the entire conduct of every man, by directing every man's conscience and will. Already he aimed at being that which in after ages he was entitled, the vicegerent of Christ upon earth. But would we know how Christ really

reigns in his kingdom actually here existing? Would we understand the nature of that spiritual dominion, which He exercises through the believer's inmost spirit upon every particular of his outward conduct? We must conceive of a King not clothed in this world's purple, nor crowned with this world's gold, but bearing the likeness, in the apprehension of the believer, "of a Lamb that was slain." Around his throne is no throng of sycophantic courtiers. No guards with sword or spear, and clad in splendid uniforms, protect his sacred person. No armies are enlisted for the enlargement of his territories, or for the oppression of his subjects. No prisons rear their frowning walls to enforce his laws. Nevertheless his will has been implicitly obeyed, these eighteen hundred years and more, by hundreds and thousands of loyal subjects, in all known quarters of the globe. And the manner of the obedience to his dominion is this:—They lay bare their consciences before Him freely, confessing their sins in his presence personally, and receiving direct, from Him, both absolution for the past, and abundant help in every present duty. For the unbelieving, the impenitent, and the disobedient, if wilful, and persisting in their wilfulness, there is indeed a judgment to come; from which no sanctuary can give them shelter; no, not though the hills of the solid earth should fall at their request, and try to cover them. But the main principle which dominates, throughout the realms of Christ's true kingdom, is not fear but love. It is the love of Christ

that constrains believers to obey. And love stays not to enquire how little it is bound to do, but hastens to do all that is within its reach. Love knows of no distinction, in its allegiance to Christ, between temporal and spiritual departments of obedience; but prompts the devout disciple, in every sphere of duty alike, to put in practice whatsoever things are "true," "honest," "just," "pure," "lovely," and "of good report." Nothing is so great as to be above its aim; nothing so small as to be beneath its notice. For it takes its limits from such apostolical directions as the following:—"Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus":—and again, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all to the glory of God."

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTENDOM ; THE DARK AGES. CENTURIES 9, -14.

THE state of Christendom generally, during the six centuries now to pass under brief review, cannot be described in any terms more appropriate than "The Dark Ages." For eight hundred years previous the true Light had been shining in the world ; but men for the most part had loved "darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." For eight hundred years the call had been proclaimed, for all men everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel ; a call which could mean no less than a total change from the love of this world to the pursuit of holiness and heaven, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. The response made to this call had been a widely extended profession of belief in the general truth of Christianity, with scarcely any perceptible corresponding subjection of the will to its demands on the heart and life. In the Eastern half of Christendom chastisement had not been spared. But however severely pruned by the scimitar of Mahomet, this branch of the vine denominated Christian yielded not in consequence any fruits meet for repentance. No, not during the six dreary centuries now before us, whilst the limits of the

Eastern Empire were being contracted into a space not much exceeding the suburbs of its capital, do we meet with any noticeable traces of either an intelligent apprehension of the faith of the Gospel, or of a self sacrificing devotion to its duties. Meanwhile Western Christendom was not without chastisements of its own. Many were the alarms, and not a few the serious assaults, with which it was long harassed by the restless forces of the Saracens. And in the irruption of the Scandinavian tribes it had to submit to injuries and humiliations, not unlike to those which had been inflicted on it by their predecessors the Goths and Vandals. It may be partly owing to these manifold trials that we meet with instances of genuine piety, during this period, with sufficient frequency to make us hope, that many more must have been visible to Him before whom all hearts are open. Nevertheless the most pernicious errors, as to the essentials of Christian faith and practice, which had long generally prevailed, now became almost universal. And the corrupt condition of morals which naturally ensued was such as to give currency to a well known saying of the times, that "Surely Christ and his saints must be asleep." The very prosperity, in which the church and its rulers were now rejoicing, was a prosperity of imposture, and of usurpation, of worldly wisdom securing worldly aggrandizement, by steadfast perseverance in a course of forgery, effrontery, and violence, all practised in the name of the lowly Jesus, and under the plea of promoting the glory of his Gospel. It was as his representa-

tive, and as wielding his power, that men who passed for ministers of his church presumed to act as rulers over kings, and claimed a right to dictate the line of duty to all rulers and all their subjects throughout the world.

At the opening of the ninth century we find this claim to a great extent admitted. And during the ages which followed, the successive pontiffs lost no opportunity of establishing it more and more firmly, by fresh devices of worldly policy and daring. Considering how many individuals were lifted up, one after another, on this pinnacle of unprecedented power, it might have been expected, that amongst them all at least some one, if not more, would seriously reflect on the real nature of his elevation, and would bethink himself of turning it to good account in his heavenly Master's service. Rank despotisms, however evil in themselves, and injurious in their results, have at least this one occasional advantage over popular governments, that whereas when the people rule themselves, the rulers can never be either wiser or better than the subjects, yet it may happen that a man is born to despotism who proves a real father to his people; their superior in wisdom and in goodness, as well as in power and authority. Thus even in the black catalogue of the earlier Roman emperors, there were some who, according to their light, sought to do justice, and delighted in exercising mercy, and seemed more anxious to promote the welfare of their subjects than to forward their own aggrandizement. But in the long list of Roman Popes, amongst many fit

to match with a Nero or Domitian, no Trajan, no Antoninus Pius, can be discerned. We find not one, who, with the light of the Gospel in his hand, sought to abase himself and to lift up his brethren ; proclaiming to Christendom, as he descended from his throne, and laid aside his sceptre and tiara, that his position was untenable, that the papal primacy was a lie from the beginning to the end, that no minister of the church had any higher office to discharge than the oversight of his brother ministers within a limited district, that all true Christian ministers and people are alike members of a royal priesthood, and that no one could be truly a disciple of Christ, without being duly taught and trained to observe all things commanded by the Lord ; these being for the most part things opposite to those which were insisted on by the authorities of Rome. Alas, no such frank acknowledgment of error, no such penitent avowal of purpose to amend, was ever forced from the lips of a Roman Pontiff, under a consciousness of the enormity of the guilt incurred, by affecting to occupy the place of Christ in his own kingdom. Rather we find that power in possession, however exorbitant already, still bred the lust for more. And even in the case of those pontiffs who seemed to pay some deference to the voice of conscience, this inward monitor appears always to have suggested, not the duty of abandoning the claims of the Roman See, but that of steadfastly upholding them. And never are men seen to work evil with so high a hand, as when conscience takes the wrong side in those who intend


to be conscientious. Then it is that falsehood is enforced with all the energy which is imparted by conceiving it to be the truth. Then it is that men injure others most atrociously, and advance their own interests most unscrupulously; quelling every reluctant scruple of humanity or of delicacy, by the notion that they are thereby doing God good service.

Of all the means that served to augment priestly and papal power the Confessional has probably had the widest influence, as well as the most permanent. But the claim of representing Christ on earth, set up by the supreme priest of all at Rome, was now to be further enforced and exercised by such means as Excommunications, launched freely against all who presumed to withstand in any way the spiritual despotism of the hierarchy; and again by Canonizing, or pronouncing blessed for evermore, all who satisfied the Pope's standard of faith and piety. To these means was added an assumed right to grant Dispensations, releasing those who could procure them from all kinds of obligations however binding, even from the most solemn oaths, or from the duty of observing the most express prohibitions of Holy Scripture. Besides all this, the Popes did not hesitate to assert, as time went on, their right to depose sovereigns, and to absolve subjects from all allegiance to sovereigns so deposed. Moreover they undertook to put any country they pleased under an Interdict; that is to say, they forbade the clergy, one and all, throughout the land, to perform the ordinary ministrations of religion. And inas-

much as the people everywhere looked to the clergy to do for them whatsoever was most needful for salvation, an interdict amounted to the suppression, as long as it lasted, of all the means by which men hoped to escape the wrath to come ; proving in extreme cases an efficacious means of reducing refractory opponents to a due submission to papal behests. Appeals from every other jurisdiction to the court of Rome proved another fruitful source of profit and of power. Then a claim was set up to the patronage of all benefices ; and a payment of First Fruits, and of Tenths, the incumbent's whole income in his first year, and a tenth of it each year afterwards, flowed steadily into the papal exchequer. By way of carrying out more completely this system of domination and extortion throughout Christendom, the popes commissioned legates with full powers to act in their behalf ; and, as if invested with their own unlimited authority, to supersede all other jurisdictions whatsoever, in the realms to which they were from time to time dispatched. And for a specimen of the way in which these legates dared to act, we may take the case of two who were sent to the Byzantine court, to settle some of the disputes, which were perpetually occurring between the Eastern and Western churches, long since formally separated. These two papal legates, being it seems dissatisfied either with the respect paid to their dignity, or with the concessions made to their demands, had the effrontery to excommunicate the Greek Patriarch in his own church of Santa Sophia ; reading the sentence aloud

from the high altar, and then formally depositing it thereon.

It is not to be supposed that the Pope and his clergy, and his host of monks and their abbots, were allowed to engross so large a share of the limited goods of earth as they were now amassing, without many a fierce struggle on the part of kings and nobles, bent upon securing as much as they could for their own enjoyment. The laity were not less worldly minded than their teachers; and were continually fighting with the clergy, as well as with each other, for principalities, and lands, and castles, and for the various moveable commodities in which the riches of that period consisted. The strife of kings with popes for the mastery, the intrigues, the treacheries, and the actual battles, which ensued, were repeated on a smaller scale in every division, and subdivision of the papal realms; with a waste of property and loss of life, and violation of the most obvious Christian principles, which tended greatly to enhance the general degradation of Western Christendom in these times. It is true that by the feudal system some little check was given to the perpetual encroachments of the clerical caste, and some security provided for a certain amount of peace, between the barons with each other, and with their sovereigns. But each feudal lord was apt to be a tyrant in his own castle; exercising over his dependents power of life and death. In these their strongholds they indulged without restraint in every form of sensuality and extortion. Thence they issued in times of peace to



pursue the sports of the field, with an ardour ruinous to the interests of those who cultivated the soil. And thence they went forth to wage their wars with one another; themselves, their knights, and even their horses clad in armour; wherein, at little risk to their own persons, they trode the people literally under foot in the field of battle, as they were accustomed to do figuratively in all the ordinary relations of life.

Nothing can be conceived more abject than the condition of the serfs, and of the labouring and trading classes generally, with few exceptions, during the earlier and greater part of these six centuries. In the church lands alone was there any ordinary security for the peaceable pursuits of agriculture. And by doles given, with little discrimination, at the convent gates, the monks certainly did something towards relieving the pauperism, which in various ways they had done much to create. In most respects there was however little or no difference between the habits of persons secular, and of persons ecclesiastical. Both were alike greatly addicted to field sports. And even in warfare, mitred abbots and prince bishops might often be seen leading their retainers into battle. Only in deference to some little scruples about bloodshedding by priestly hands, they used to wield the mace for beating out the brains in preference to slaying with the sword; a curious distinction, to which it is thought that we owe the custom of carrying a mace before eminent church dignitaries, as practised down to the present time. Doubtless some of the clergy must have been

pains taking pastors, however ignorant of the truth they ought to have been teaching. And there must have been some within convent walls who were sincere in their piety, according to their light, and also not a few unflinching ascetics. But it seems indisputable that the monkish order in those times, as a body, was superstitious, ferocious, and profligate. And with such men for their teachers and for their confessors, the nuns were not likely to profit much by their seclusion. Unavailing regret in the hopelessness of their lot was too often mingled with shame and horror for the breach of their vows. And as to those who were guilty of corrupting them, severe canons were directed against both monks and clergy, charging these celibates with the worst offences of which Scripture accuses the most profligate of the heathen ; rendering venial in comparison the licentiousness of the barons, and of the chivalrous but for the most part ill principled knights. The unchristian state of Christendom in these times is painfully illustrated, by the frantic terror, which at the conclusion of the tenth century seemed to overwhelm all minds alike ; under the apprehension, that the end of the world would surely take place at the close of the thousand years then about to expire. In obedience to the dictates of a blind superstition the most preposterous means of safety were resorted to ; but no consolation was sought for in the resources of genuine Christianity. No one seems to have so much as heard, that it is the true Christian's privilege to be always looking

with cheerful hope to the day of the Lord's appearing, always reckoning, with unfeigned joy, that He might any day appear. And yet surely that man can have little ground for thinking that he is justified by a saving faith in Christ, or sanctified by a true work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, who does not mean what he utters, as often as he prays, "thy kingdom come," and cannot join heartily, however reverently, and humbly, with the apostle John, in saying, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

When this alarm proved groundless, men returned with double ardour to their worldly ways. And ere the close of another century, as if the demons of warfare were not satisfied with the wars and fightings of Christians, between nation and nation, and between baron and baron, on points of honour, or of jealousy, or for the furtherance of ambition or renown, the principles of Christ's Gospel were further violated, and fresh outrage was offered to the Prince of peace, by the device of the Crusades; called by a strange abuse of language "Holy Wars;" undertaken by Christendom with a wild eagerness; professedly directed to the purpose of wresting Jerusalem from the grasp of the Mahometans, but largely animated by a spirit of retaliation for the long series of Mahometan victories over Christians. The Popes took up the cause of these fanatical enterprises with the utmost zeal. They were prodigal in their promises of absolutions, of dispensations, and of plenary indulgences now first invented, to be given freely to all

who enlisted; with an assurance of the bliss of martyrs to as many as fell in battle. For more tangible rewards the recruits in this new service had proposed to them exemptions from taxes, and from civil processes; and their leaders had the prospect of procuring for themselves lands and principalities in the East, as well as the hope of abundant spoil, to be shared between themselves and their retainers. For above a century and a half, these appeals to superstition and cupidity induced successive hosts to congregate in Europe for the invasion of Asia; and to undergo, as well as perpetrate, the most fearful sufferings, both by the way, and in the field of their operations; all their defeats and victories, varied with famine, pestilence, and massacre, resulting in the final triumph of the Saracen arms. Amongst the special horrors connected with these unchristian enterprises were the siege and sacking of Constantinople; the storming and pillaging of one of the two chief capitals of Christendom, partly for private ends, but mainly with a view to bringing its church under thralldom to the pontiff reigning in the other. A second noteworthy horror of these Holy Wars was the "Boy Crusade" as it was called. Nearly thirty thousand children, including some hapless little girls, were sent forth by their deluded parents, at the instigation of a fanatic preacher; with the idea of defeating the Saracens, by dint of their white garments, and of the tapers burning in their hands. These victims of superstition were offered a free passage from Marseilles by certain merchants; who,

having got them on board their vessels carried most of them to Egypt, and there sold them for slaves, the rest perishing by the foundering of their ships at sea. Let one redeeming circumstance be mentioned, to the credit of at least one of the crusaders, and of the sentimental chivalry which animated not a few of them. The pious Godfrey, being elected king of Jerusalem, when the first crusade terminated in its capture, declined the kingship in these memorable words: "God forbid that I should wear a crown of gold in the city where my Saviour wore a crown of thorns!"

Religious wars were not confined to crusades; they were the means chiefly used in these ages for converting to the Christian profession the many pagan tribes still swarming in the northern parts of Europe; that is to say, for bringing them under allegiance to the Pope. Neither were crusades limited to subduing infidels; they were directed with still greater fury and barbarity against the Albigenses and Waldenses, and other Christians who gave offence to the papal court, by repudiating the false doctrines of Rome, or withstanding its despotic usurpations. Persecution, and suppression by outward force, had from the times of Constantine been the usual method of dealing with all differences of opinion tending to disturb the rigid uniformity of the church; which, even when divided into two antagonistic communions, still called itself Catholic in both. A Roman annalist, of high authority in his own communion, holds that the see of Rome has such virtue, as that, however great

may be a man's personal delinquencies, his being a Pope constitutes him perforce a saint. By some similar process of reasoning the conclusion has been generally arrived at, that to be a church reformer is of necessity to be a heretic. Upon this principle, in an earlier period, Jovinian and Vigilantius were silenced; and both their followers and their writings were suppressed. Our own Wicliffe narrowly escaped a worse lot, towards the close of the fourteenth century. And as the intensity of the corruptions of the church stirred up in various directions fresh efforts to promote amendment, the whole papal power was directed to the task of extirpating by fire and sword all suspected of aiding and abetting in circulating or searching the Holy Scriptures, and of trying the long established ways of man by the test of the everlasting Gospel. New orders of celibates, the Franciscan and Dominican, were added to the existing champions of the church, and specially pledged to uphold the papal system against all comers. And the institution of the Dominicans in particular has to be marked for universal abhorrence, because of its connexion with the hateful Inquisition; the most unprincipled and most blood stained of all agencies ever devised by man, for rooting out of Christendom, if it were possible, every genuine disciple of Christ, every loving and dutiful child of God. To show the extent to which the charge of heresy could be strained by these Inquisitors, it may be mentioned, that in the fourteenth century four friars were burnt to death, as heretics, because they thought themselves bound,

by the rules of their order, to wear hoods made of cloth not quite so fine as the pattern approved of by the Pope. But the chief aim of the Inquisition was to suppress any questioning of such essentially papal tenets and practices as Transubstantiation, the Withholding of the Cup from the Laity in the Lord's Supper, the use of a Dead Language in public worship, the treasury of superfluous Merits at the Pope's disposal, Indulgences, and the keys of Purgatory ; the forbidding the people to read the Bible, this being the surest means of perpetuating spiritual darkness ; and the enforced Celibacy of priests, monks, and nuns, this last being the ordinance, which of all others inflicted upon Christendom by man's wilfulness and selfishness, wrought the largest amount of evil, physically, socially, and morally ; being at the same time the most directly contrary to the will of that gracious Father of mankind, amongst whose attributes it is significantly recorded, that "He setteth the solitary in families."

Never was Christendom less like unto a kingdom of Christ on earth, than at the close of the Dark Ages. Never did the reflected light of its secondary Christianity contain less of the true radiance of the Gospel. The Eastern half, reduced within narrow limits, and as insensible as ever to its shortcomings and delinquencies, was awaiting its final subjugation by the Ottomans, who had taken the lead amongst the followers of Mahomet. Even Mahometanism, besides its own deadly falsehood, had become tainted with asceticism, and ritualism, and with a veneration for relics, as well as with formal-

ism and priestcraft; assimilating itself in these and kindred superstitions to the Christendom, which it never ceased to hate, and to the Heathendom, from which all such false religion was derived. Neither was the light of secular learning any longer shining, as it had been, in the realms of Islam; whence Christendom had taken lessons in philosophy and poetry, in mathematics and astronomy, in chemistry and agriculture, and had derived a system of arithmetical notation, without which it is hard to see how modern science could have achieved many of its most important successes. The lack of secular learning thus generally prevailing was no doubt one reason of the title given to this dismal period. And to add to the religious darkness and perplexity of the times in Western Christendom, as well as to quicken those yearnings for a reformation in the church, which seemed to herald the return of dawn, there were actually during seventy years of the fourteenth century two Popes enthroned in opposition to each other, and for a short time three; each upheld by his partisans as the unquestionable representative of Christ, each denouncing his rivals and their followers, and each grasping for himself as much of the papal power and revenues as he could. It would seem impossible that human folly and credulity should descend to so low a depth, as that, after the scandal of this long lasting schism, men should still implicitly acquiesce in the Pope's pretensions. But perhaps this was wanted, to prove to Christendom, when the crisis of reform arrived, the depth of its own degrading infatuation. It is

the prerogative of the Ruler of the universe to bring good out of evil. And it is the privilege of those who know that "God is love," to feel assured, that not one particle of sin, suffering, or sorrow, ever has existed, or ever will exist, that will not redound to grace and glory in the end; as surely as the vilest refuse of the earth yields in due season the fairest flowers, and the most precious fruits. And though it is not for man to see the end from the beginning, we may often observe with profit, as events progress, how the very intensity of a wrong excites such an impatience under its pressure, as will pave the way for its ultimate redress. That this was the case with the papal system is past question. And lest there should be any doubt as to the justice of ascribing to that system so large a share in the degeneracy of Christendom, let us hear the testimony of attached members of the church of Rome, of avowed believers in the primacy of the see of Peter, that false foundation of the whole illusory superstructure. In a work fortified throughout by reference to the highest Romanist authorities, these honest Romanists speak of the papal court at Rome, as it was at the close of the Dark Ages, in the following unmitigated terms: "It seemed as though, through the state of things gradually brought about, and the dominant system in Rome, a new art had been discovered among men, that of making corruption and vice omnipresent, and diffusing it, like some subtle poison, from one centre and workshop, throughout every pore of the vast organization of the church." (Janus. Ed; 2. 1869. P. 341.)

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTENDOM ; IN THE ERA OF THE REFORMATION.
CENTURIES 15, 16.

WITHIN fifteen years after Luther first denounced Tetzel's shameless sale of Indulgences, above one third of Germany had declared itself Protestant. But although the wave of the mighty revolution now to pass under review spent its chief energy in a comparatively short time, it took many a long year to rise to its full height, and as many more ere its waters subsided into that state of half repose, half restlessness, in which they have ever since remained. The Reformation was indeed by no means the fruit of conviction, however forcible, in one or more individuals however influential. Rather it was the expression of longings and purposes nurtured during generations throughout Christendom, ready to burst forth into action at the first concurrence of favorable circumstances. Of such circumstances there were many which had been occurring and gaining growth before Luther was born, conspiring with others which came into operation whilst he was growing up to maturity. And thus when the hour was ripe for striking the blow, the man was at hand ready to strike it. Amongst these

preparatory conditions, it is to be observed, that the Crusades, followed by the use of gunpowder in war, broke up the feudal system; and helped to work a change affecting the whole frame of society, alike in the pursuits of war and in those of peace. Of the barons, many lost their lives, many wasted their substance, in the Holy Wars. Hired soldiers took the place of knights in armour. Citizens, and chartered towns, began to assert rights of their own, against the exclusive privileges of the lords of the soil. In Italy arose powerful republics. And in the other leading countries of Europe kings were rapidly consolidating their dominions, and enlarging their prerogatives. Secular power, thus concentrated in few hands, was better able to cope with the papal usurpation, than when divided amongst the numerous but disconnected barons. And it was chiefly under the pressure of state influence, thus brought to bear upon the papal court, that after the popes had exhausted all devices for delay, councils were assembled, one at Constance and another afterwards at Basle, for the avowed purpose of reforming church abuses. However little progress in this great work was effected by these assemblages, it was no small gain to have the evils of the existing system freely discussed before the face of Christendom. And the subterfuges by which these efforts to redress wrongs were thwarted, as well as the violence used to intimidate the party of reform, though they postponed the day of its accomplishment, helped to ensure its succeeding at last. The burning of Huss and Jerome at Constance, in viola-

tion of an emperor's safe conduct, was a crime of such enormity, that it could not fail to draw down upon its perpetrators the indignant reprobation of multitudes, now awakening to a keener sense of right and wrong. Scarcely less apt to move general indignation was the frequently repeated spectacle, of men chosen for the papal throne on the ground of their having advocated reform, and stedfastly resisting it when enthroned. Such an one was *Æneas Sylvius*; who accounted for his dereliction of principle by declaring, that according to his judgment as Pope, he must have been in a state of damnable heresy, when he took part with church reformers at Basle. Nor was it of small moment, as tending to inflame the desire for some great change, that if there need ever be such a monster in the shape of man as Borgia, claiming to be Christ's vicar upon earth, the scandal of that most infamous pontificate should shed its lurid light over the church, for the space of eleven years, just as Luther was growing up to manhood.

Meanwhile many great steps in advance had been taken by the human mind in literature, and art, and science; incompatible with the perpetuity of that gross darkness amid which the papal system had attained its lofty height, though not necessarily implying any extension of the light of genuine Christianity. The telescope and the microscope enlarged, to an indefinite extent, man's powers of becoming acquainted with the wonders of creation. The mariner's compass very greatly extended the limited range of navigation. Columbus opened a

new world to the astonished denizens of his native hemisphere. And the Cape of Good Hope being doubled soon afterwards, and India reached by circumnavigating Africa, the true form of the earth which we inhabit was no longer a matter of theory but of experience. Then the taking of Constantinople by the Turks caused a migration into Western Christendom of men conversant with the learning of antiquity; who brought with them their treasured manuscripts; whereby the study of the most renowned authors, in two of the most expressive of all languages, of which one was that of the New Testament, was soon substituted for the unprofitable jargon of the schoolmen, in the universities with which Europe at that time abounded. "To know Greek" it has been said by a competent judge, "was the basis of the Reformation." And the Romanists seemed to have foreseen this issue, when they warned their votaries, "Beware of Greek, lest you become a heretic." To crown all came the invention of the art of printing, in the midst of the fifteenth century, soon brought to a high degree of perfection; multiplying copies of books, and bringing them within reach of a rapidly increasing class of readers, to an extent which makes it hard to account for the depth of ignorance, on almost all subjects, in which most of those now dwelling in Christendom pass their lives. One of the first applications of this new art was to print copies of the Holy Bible, in the translations then existing, and afterwards in the original languages. It gave also a great impulse to the important work of translat-

ing the Scriptures into the languages chiefly in use. This one particular agency for increasing knowledge in general, thus became at once powerfully conducive to the increase of knowledge in religion. And if there be any device of human ingenuity, any one of the remarkable discoveries with which the period was teeming, to which rather than to any other we are indebted for the success achieved by the blessed Reformation, it is undoubtedly the art of printing ; through the facilities afforded by the press for the circulation of the Holy Bible amongst the people.

Whilst we ever acknowledge with deep thankfulness the light thus let in upon the darkness of the preceding ages, a light to which all the ages subsequent have owed blessings great and manifold, we must not hesitate to admit the fact, that of two chief principles which animated the movement, one was as thoroughly worldly and carnal, as the other was evangelical and spiritual. The spiritual movement was directed by men who loved the truth for its own sake, and who proved their love of it, in many instances, by suffering for it even unto death. These were men of study and reflexion, of piety and prayer ; who, however deeply steeped from childhood in Romish superstitions, having now free access to the true standard of Christianity, saw with horror how far they had been led astray themselves, and had helped in misleading others. Such as these devoted their lives to retracing their false steps, retrieving their grievous mistakes, and reclaiming their brethren, as far as in them lay, from the error

of their ways. Of such men however there were not likely to be more than few, amongst a people who for many generations had been devoted to the love of this world's goods, and rarely trained either to know, or do, the things which Christ Jesus most insists on in his word. Whilst on the other hand the most worldly of the laity could readily discern in the pages of the New Testament, without studying them very deeply, how wrong it must be for the church ministers and the religious orders to engross supremacy in worldly power, wealth, and rank. It was for their own gain that such church Reformers as these bestirred themselves; using the lamp of truth divine as burglars handle their dark lanterns, making the light to glare on those whom they want to rob, never turning it on themselves, or on their own evil deeds. It has been computed that in many countries from one third to one half of the soil was at this time vested in ecclesiastical persons and corporations; who, in addition, enjoyed various immunities, and exercised powers and prerogatives independently of secular rulers. And above all was the Roman Pontiff, supreme in irresponsible authority; to whose treasury all had to contribute, and to whose will all must hold themselves subject. It was no longer possible to keep men blind to the conviction, that this was a state of things flat contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament. Kings and nobles might care little for sound doctrine, thriving citizens might be themselves worshippers of mammon, and yet all might agree, that such worship ill became the clerical

caste; and all labor in earnest at the work of grasping, each class for itself, as much as could be wrung from its grasping possessors. They were still willing, in most instances, to let the clergy transact for them, as before, their spiritual affairs. But they demurred to paying so exorbitant a price for this service any longer. And thus the worldliness to which the debased Christianity of the Dark Ages had given full development in the laity, was one of the chief forces brought to bear in discomfiting that gigantic usurpation, which it had prompted the clergy to set up.

This determined purpose on the part of kings, nobles, and citizens, to secure for themselves a larger share of worldly power and property, by wresting it from the clerical caste, accounts for the history of the Reformation having to do with secular potentates and personages, quite as much as with preachers, scholars, and divines. And hence it came to pass, that worldly policy and diplomacy, together with the arms of worldly warfare, occupy a chief place in the means resorted to, not only by the papal party in defending their position, but also by the Reformers in maintaining theirs. On the Pope's side, to begin with measures purely ecclesiastical, one chief agency made use of was the order of the Jesuits; men drilled to practise the entire obliteration of their own wills and consciences, pledged to sacrifice every consideration, human and divine, at the bidding of their Superior, in the interests of the Papacy. Amongst their various unprincipled devices, which included almost

every crime that can be conceived, one of the most successful, and one which is even now employed in the interests of the papacy, was to pass themselves off for protestants, and in this character to foment divisions, and to bring disaster and disgrace, by all means in their power, upon the cause which they were pretending to promote. The council of Trent was another means devised by the papal faction for reestablishing their waning power throughout Christendom. At this council several of the most unchristian tenets and practices of Romanism were fastened permanently on that corrupt system of religion; and being afterwards embodied in the creed named after one of the Popes, and added to the ancient creeds as of equal authority, effectually severed the Romanist communion ever after from the churches of all preceding ages. A council and a confraternity were appropriate weapons of papal warfare; but besides these, the Popes lost no opportunity of employing methods more essentially secular; nay, they made no scruple of using some that were most atrocious, whether adopted by priests or princes. Their chief reliance was on the policy of stirring up such sovereigns, as remained under their influence, to use the sword without flinching in their cause. Their foremost champions in battle were the rulers of Germany, France, and Spain. And amongst the most notable of the enterprises of these upholders of the papal system, during the period under our review, were the wars waged by Charles V. in Germany, and by Alva, the lieutenant of his son Philip,

in the Netherlands; to which may be added the Spanish Armada, and the massacre of Huguenots in France on St Bartholomew's day. Besides these overt acts of unrelenting warfare, and indiscriminate slaughter, there is evidence the most undeniable, of attempts, made and sanctioned by papal priests and princes, to compass privately the assassination of more than one of the chief champions of the protestant cause. The names of such assassins hired, and their stipulated pay, have been lately met with in the gloomy archives of the Spanish monarchy; together with a record of the fact, that these guilty emissaries of a tenfold guilty potentate, before setting out on their perilous enterprises, first received the popish sacrament of the mass, as well as priestly absolution for the wilful murder they were intending to commit.

No such enormities as these were ever laid to the charge of those royal personages, who took the protestant cause under their protection. But neither were these as averse to wield the sword, and to fight for truth with the weapons of worldly warfare, as they ought to have been, according to God's word in the Gospel. Battles and sieges, victories and defeats, these things cannot take place, without two parties adopting such methods for adjusting their differences. And such things did take place frequently, as between papist and protestant hosts, even before the close of the sixteenth century. And, worst of all, it is past question, that men of piety and prayer amongst the protestants, who ought to have known better, were

not unwilling to avail themselves of these unjustifiable means, for the advancement of their sacred cause. Luther indeed expressed himself as happy in being taken to his rest, before blood had been shed, in his fatherland, over these deadly differences. But that Luther's spirit was not of the most gentle kind, may be inferred from one of his characteristic sayings, running thus: "There are many who think I am too fierce about the Popedom. On the contrary I complain that I am, alas, too mild. I wish I could breathe out lightning against Popedom and Pope, and that every word were a thunderbolt." Language in this strain was not likely to conduce to the peaceable settlement of strife. And however natural it might be to the temperament of the man, and however naturally provoked by the rank corruptions in the papal system, it is to be feared that these, and similar sentiments, uttered by the spiritual guides of the reform movement, one of whom, Zuingle, fell in battle himself, must have encouraged their secular supporters, to use the weapons of carnal warfare in furtherance of the reformation of religion.

In our estimate of private character and responsibility, we are bound always to take into account each man's light, and his temptations, and obstructions, as qualifying circumstances, which cannot fail to modify the final judgment on his case. But in a sketch of the character of Christendom, we are pledged to deal impartially with facts as we find them; and are bound to try the actions and the principles of papists and of protestants alike, by

the invariable standard of God's word. Bringing religious warfare to this test, we find it utterly unwarrantable in all who wage it, or aid it, or abet it. Let it be granted, that kings are justified in calling on their subjects to resist in arms a wanton invasion of their realms, and that warfare simply defensive may be looked upon as the legitimate action of the police of nations, for the repression of evil-doers on a large scale. These admissions furnish little excuse for the wars and fightings which took place in the era of the Reformation, over the spoils of the papal usurpers, and over the disputes engendered by their usurpations. In some instances indeed these wars may be deemed defensive in their character, and chiefly so on the protestant side. But before the close of the sixteenth century, and during the early part of the century following, they assumed the character of implacable hostility; of warfare carried on most obstinately and relentlessly, aggressive on either side alike, for the settled purpose of deciding by the sword which of the two should prevail in Christendom. These were not the means adopted for promulgating truth, of which the apostles set an example to their disciples. It was not by fighting furiously, but by preaching with faithfulness, and suffering with fortitude, that the early triumphs of the Gospel were achieved. And it is only by such services as these, including the unconscious influence of a life consistent with their calling, that the true soldiers of Jesus Christ are commissioned to enlarge his kingdom. For certainly no reason can be conceived, why Peter

should be forbidden by his divine Master to unsheathe the sword for his protection, in the garden of Gethsemane, which would not tell, with at least equal force, against those who plied their more deadly artillery in his cause, on the blood stained battle fields of Christendom.

If then it must be admitted, that after all the good wrought by the Reformation, the profession of a sound faith was often disfigured by a worldly life, if the prevalent religion of the most enlightened realms in Christendom has been ever since only a secondary Christianity, though of a much higher standard than before, these lamentable results must be largely ascribed to the fact, that the secular powers, which took the side of Luther and his associates, were chiefly prompted by worldly considerations. To avail themselves of such aid gladly, and to place dependence on it implicitly, was a grave error on the part of the more devout Reformers; who in confronting the papal claims took their stand upon the Bible, as the charter of their rights, and as their unerring guide in the performance of their duties. It was like attempting to discomfit Mammon, with Mammon's help. Nor was this the only error for which the prime movers in this holy enterprize were responsible. For the sake of gaining or retaining the equivocal protection of these worldly patrons, they were tempted to sanction such reprehensible actions, as those of which the Landgrave of Hesse, and our own Henry VIII., were guilty, in the relations of married life. Considering that Luther and Mel-

anthon and Cranmer, and all their chief helpers in the work, had been brought up in the worldly ways of the Roman superstition, it is indeed no marvel, that they connived at evil in others under the notion that good would come of it to their cause; or that they trusted to the wrath of man that it would forward the righteousness of God; deeming warfare, and persecution, and excommunication suitable means for bending others to their own opinions. Born and bred in thick darkness, they could hardly help being somewhat dazzled by the light suddenly breaking forth. And hence also they wasted much of their precious energy in disputing about questions insoluble by man, and tending to divide those whose union was most essential to their success. Under these influences they took more pains in adjusting the technical expressions of their creeds, and the narrow limits of their terms of communion, than in winning men from the service of sin, and from their eager competition for this world's objects, to the love of God and of each other, and to a brotherly helping forward of one another in the things of both time and eternity. Interminable were their controversies about the sacraments. But so much thought was expended in defining the nature and the efficacy of baptism, that no adequate provision was made, though some was partially attempted, for the long neglected but indispensable work, of training up the baptized both to know and do all things commanded by Christ. And the vehement conflict of opinion as to the supposed mystery of the Lord's Supper, and as to the due manner of its

celebration, was the means of fomenting severances, and of estranging brethren, instead of drawing them to partake together of a spiritual feast, wherein to commemorate Christ's love in dying for them, and to nourish and show forth their love for Him and for each other. The master minds in this great movement did well to attach great importance to laying aright the foundation of sound doctrine. But no course was more sure to promote divisions, than presuming to decide peremptorily that which Scripture has not clearly defined. How much better had they simply labored to build up, in the church, the kind of life explicitly enjoined in the Gospel, on the truth therein plainly revealed. Then they would have straitly charged the great, not only to forbear from fighting for the truth, but to cease from their luxurious enjoyment of purple, and fine linen, and daily sumptuous fare ; and to devote their energies and means to qualifying the long depressed working classes to enjoy a fairer share of those good things of earth, which God's goodness supplies abundantly for all. Then they would have warned rulers not to appropriate to themselves, nor to bestow on courtiers and dependents, the spoil wrested from the greedy grasp of those who had been spoiling Christendom for ages ; but rather to spend it in making the homes of their poorer brother Christians to abound, in the gifts of God's providence, and in the blessings of his grace. Like Paul and Silas they would have so proclaimed the truth, that "there is another king, one Jesus," and have so insisted on its practical application, as either to make

earthly rulers submit to Christ's dominion, or else to be charged with treason themselves. No one however accused them of turning "the world upside down;" though they did this to a great extent with the Papacy. But in this their arduous undertaking the world offered them its help; and so remained itself erect and in the ascendant as before.

The result as a whole was indeed great gain; but it was not a thorough reformation of religion, not a renewal of apostolical Christianity, not an unreserved submission of reformed Christendom to the whole counsel of God, for man's salvation, present and eternal, as set forth in the Gospel. The sacred books of Christianity, the lively oracles of God committed to the church of Christ as its chiefest trust, and its most precious treasure, were set up in their proper place of honor and authority. A host of demigods was dethroned from the papal Olympus, and their images were trodden under foot. Myriads were released from the horrors of enforced celibacy; and parents ceased to sacrifice their helpless offspring to this Moloch of ascetic superstition. Worship was no longer offered to God in a dead language; and it became possible, for all who would, to pray to Him and to praise Him, both "with the spirit and with the understanding also." The polluting questionings and confidences of the confessional came to an end; and instead of submitting their motives and conduct to the direction of a priest, men were taught to consult their own consciences enlightened by the word of God. More-

over wherever the Reformation made good its ground, the increasing study and enlightened apprehension of God's word brought to pass, in course of time, many other signal benefits, both civil and religious, in proportion as its principles were put in practice. But whilst one part of Western Christendom was thus freed from the most galling of its chains, disenthralled from the most devilish of its enchantments, the other portion was hardened in its alienation from the truth, and arrested but little, if at all, in its perpetually downward course. Complete success in a work of God could not wait upon those, whose aims and means were largely leavened with a worldly spirit. Men acted too much under the impulse of resentment for the wrongs they had endured in time past, as well as with a view to their present temporal advantages. And in the measure of success obtained, they took too much credit to themselves, for their own sense, spirit, and exertions. And therefore Christendom did not become Christ's kingdom upon earth; no, not even that portion of it which threw off the yoke of Rome. A much wider scope was therein given for the enlarging of that kingdom, together with unspeakably greater facilities for knowing the true Gospel, and believing it, and loving it. This was the greatest gain of all conferred on Protestant communities; and it reached sometimes, through their means, even into papal realms. But as for the multitude who cared for none of these things, they were content to gain new liberty, in following their own ways, and new

openings for building up their own fortunes. The movement went little further than kings and queens permitted it. Where they favored it, the Reformation was established. And it was suppressed where they set their faces against it. Even over its formularies they often exercised an irresponsible control. And the boundary between its domain and that of Popery has scarcely varied, down to the present time, from those limits which their sovereign will first prescribed. It never reached the Eastern church at all. It stopped short at half the Western ; and did not so much as half reform those whom it comprehended. It left them for the most part as worldly minded, as sensual, as resentful, as combative, as vainglorious as it found them. And the lesson which this defective issue of so great an impulse teaches us is this : That for the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdom of Christ must be the work not of man but of God ; and that, as far as man can forward it, he needs to use God's method, and not his own, and must expect success not from his own might, nor for his own credit, but through the working of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom must be ascribed all the glory.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTENDOM ; PAPAL, AND PROTESTANT. CENTURIES 17, 18.

DURING the era of the Reformation the external features of Christendom were wholly altered ; and no small change took place inwardly, through the prevalence of new ideas, new motives, and new principles of action. For ages previously the great domain to which this high title was applied had answered less than ever to its name ; becoming more unlike to Christ's kingdom as it became more thoroughly the dominion of the Pope. But now Popedom was cleft in twain ; and one of the halves was become persistently Protestant. And inasmuch as Eastern Christendom still remained for the most part stationary in the back ground, the branches into which our subject divides itself, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are indicated, by the distinction between those communities which adhered to the papal system, and those which had renounced it. We shall have to mark the progress made by these two halves of Western Christendom respectively, in the divergent directions they adopted ; watching each carefully, to see in what respects they drew nearer to the standard of the Gospel, and in

what they receded from it further than before. And in bringing to the test of Scripture their institutions, civil and political, and their habits of life, social and personal, it is not proposed to discuss questions of theology, nor to assume the settlement of points so far open to discussion, as that wise and good men still view them in diverse lights. Systems and principles, and the faults which they shew a tendency to produce, will be tried, as they have been chiefly hitherto in this our sketch of Christendom, by such acknowledged axioms of Christianity as the following: that "Love is the fulfilling of the law,"—that "Covetousness is idolatry,"—and again, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon,"—and once more, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

There was one matter of primary importance, in which the two contending parties seemed to be wholly of one mind; and that a mind very alien to the mind of Christ Jesus; both of them being clearly of opinion, that the legitimate method of settling all their differences, whether civil or religious, was to fight with the weapons of this world's warfare. On either side they rushed into conflicts the most destructive of life and of life's enjoyments; inflicting without compunction, often even on the unarmed, outrages the most intolerable to the sufferers, and most detrimental to the moral standing of the perpetrators. Never did wars rage more fiercely, nor last longer, nor succeed each other with so little intermission, as those of Christendom in the two centuries now to be reviewed. The thirty

years' war in Germany takes precedence in date, and in its duration and atrocities; as well as in the consideration, that it was carried on all along, expressly on the ground of differences in religion. It was on the most formidable scale of all the military enterprises undertaken by the princes who were subject to papal influence, for regaining the lost supremacy of the Pope over the protestant part of Western Christendom. And so obstinately was this long protracted contest carried on by the antipapal powers, that neither party gained any great advantage over the other, after all their mutual bloodshedding during so many years; the peace of Westphalia, at the end of it, conceding to the protestants, in terms which were not very faithfully observed, the enjoyment of their liberties, religious and civil, on the same footing as they stood at the beginning. It was during this unusually prolonged contest that the notorious siege of Magdeburg took place; at the fall of which fiercely defended fortress the cruelties laid to the charge of the papal victors, in the butchery of their vanquished fellow Christians, far exceeded the ordinary measure of inhumanity attendant on the storming of a long beleaguered city. This thirty years' war in the German empire was in many respects the most scandalous, and the most ruinous, of all the wars that were ever waged on the plea of establishing the true faith. At the end of it, the population of Germany is said to have been reduced to one third of what it was at the beginning. The enmity which it engendered be-

tween the two contending parties was bitter and enduring. And to add to the waters of bitterness, the two sections of German protestants, the Lutheran and the Reformed, even in the presence of their formidable antagonists, often proved themselves almost as hostile to each other, as to the foe who was endeavouring to crush both. The effect of this evil conflict, on the moral character of the portion of Christendom engaged in it, has been described by one of its historians as follows : " Such was the state of triumphant crime, that men, in despair, denied the existence of a deity ; declaring, that if there were a God in heaven, He would not fail to destroy, with thunder and lightning, a world of such sin and shame."

After this horrible war in Germany came the wars of Louis XIV. of France ; who in virtue of his French sovereignty claimed the boastful title of " eldest son of the church." With this sovereign however the furtherance of the cause of mother church was only of secondary importance ; he fought chiefly for the gratification of his own vanity or ambition. Indeed as time went on, the secular rulers of Europe were less easily persuaded to engage in warfare, either for furthering the pope's interests, or for thwarting them. To adjust the balance of power amongst themselves was the chimerical object on which they now preferred to waste the blood and treasure of their people ; in the eager pursuit of military glory, and to the serious detriment of all social and religious progress. The war of the Spanish Succession, and the Seven Years'

War in Germany, helped to fill up the intervals between the more lengthened contests of the series. And the fratricidal conflict of England with its colonies, towards the end of the eighteenth century, was soon followed by the deadly strife of the great French Revolution, and by the world wide war to which it gave rise almost immediately. According to all historians warfare was thus the most prominent characteristic of Christendom, during the two centuries which ensued on the Reformation. Great facility was doubtless given to warlike enterprise in general, by the concentration of power in the hands of sovereigns more or less irresponsible, and by the system of standing armies now generally adopted, as well as by the device of raising funds for present state expenditure on the credit of future state income. Nevertheless it seems strange that protestant communities, with the Gospel for their acknowledged rule of conduct, should have felt no more scruple as to their being at liberty to engage in war, than the papal nations; who with the Bible closed against them, had only human traditions for their guidance. Nothing can be more explicit than the apostolic answer to the question: "From whence come wars and fightings among you"? And not to dwell upon specific texts, nothing can be more clear or beyond dispute, than that the general tone and spirit of the New Testament are utterly opposed to the admiration generally entertained for military zeal, and prowess, and glory. Where the light of Scripture was suppressed, and its teachings were distorted, men might easily be

persuaded, that fighting on their own account, or for the propagation of what they took for true religion, was as warrantable in Christians, as fighting by Jehovah's express directions was in the Israelites. But protestants never pretended to find orders in the New Testament for invading the territories of their neighbours; either with a view to gaining proselytes, or for the furtherance of their own ambitious projects. Nevertheless scarcely any of them, excepting members of a small community called The Friends, seem ever to have entertained the slightest doubt, that they were at full liberty to devote their lives to the calling of a soldier, as a means of livelihood with prospect of high preferment; holding themselves bound to fight in any cause, just or unjust, with equal readiness, provided only they implicitly obeyed orders.

There was another practice pregnant with much evil, that of state diplomacy, which during this period was carried to a great height, in the various courts of Western Christendom, whether they were on terms of amity with the papacy or not. Although diplomacy purported to be pacific in its nature, it had much to do with fomenting many a deadly war; and it was for the most part conducted on principles as alien to those of genuine Christianity as warfare itself. Each sovereign had his accredited representatives at the courts of all the others. And it was the supposed duty of these envoys and ambassadors, to spare no pains in over-reaching one another; with a view to advancing the

pretensions and the interests of their respective royal masters and employers. Many a treaty had its secret articles, which were not to be divulged until the party who was to be overreached had been effectually beguiled by those articles which were openly proclaimed. Few treaties, however solemnly ratified, failed to be broken without scruple, when it might seem to serve the purpose of either party. It was by diplomacy, rather than by force of arms that the iniquitous partition of Poland was effected; on which occasion Russia came forward, with a capacity for intrigue for which it has since been notable, to take its part in the confederacy of European sovereigns. And it is worthy of remark, that in this felonious destruction of a whole nation, compassed by successive compacts for its dismemberment, the three leading communities of all Christendom were represented; the Greek by Russia, the Roman by Austria, and the Protestant by Prussia;—a striking proof that no one of these conflicting systems of religion had trained the most exalted of its votaries to obey the commandment common to them all, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s goods.” The foundation of the British empire in India was laid in the crooked paths of this diplomatic system, quite as much as by the weapons of aggressive warfare. The treachery of Clive had as large a share as his military achievements, in the rapid strides first made by England in that quarter of the globe. The trial of Hastings disclosed as much of chicanery as of violence, in the dealings of

that representative of Christian rulers with a heathen and Mahometan population. And the like may be said of nearly all those encroachments on territories belonging to the feeble and defenceless, which by degrees have added to nominal Christendom the West Indies as well as the East, together with North and South America, and Australasia. It was indeed once well said, that honor, if everywhere else expelled from earth, would find its last refuge in the breasts of kings. But the insincerity which kings thus commonly sanctioned in their representatives, and of which some of them were personally guilty, did much, during this period of awakened intelligence, to deprive them of the respect due to their sacred office. The licentious misconduct of others, both papal and protestant, tended further to bring royalty into discredit. Nor was it a scandal of small moment, as tending both to this discredit and to this cause of it, that royal marriages became more and more matters of expediency, and considerations for diplomacy; in which natural affection was sacrificed, without the slightest hesitation, to state policy, or to the pride of a royal family.

Amongst the chief nations which now constituted Western Christendom, Germany was partly papal, partly protestant; whilst France and Spain were the main pillars of papal supremacy, and England was deemed the bulwark of the Reformation. Against England therefore the popes naturally directed their most strenuous exertions for the recovery of their lost revenue and power. In England their Jesuit and other emissaries ever labored

most incessantly to promote the papal cause. Sometimes such an agency as that of Guy Fawkes was resorted to. Sometimes Romanist queens did the pope good service, sharing the thrones of protestant kings. Phrases admitting of a Romish construction, left inadvertently in the reformed Anglican formularies, have been often turned to account for Romanizing purposes. Advantage was also taken of the mistake made by the English Reformers, in ascribing to Councils and Fathers too much authority, as compared with the word of God. But the most subtle and most pernicious of their devices, and the one which has been traced home to Jesuit instrumentality, was to enfeeble the pope's chief opponents, by dividing them; sometimes by stimulating the objections and scruples of nonconformists, and sometimes by spurring on the intolerance, which first drove men into nonconformity, and then denounced them for a schism of its own making. Men were ready enough, of their own accord, in a generation still for the most part worldly and unenlightened by the truth, to turn into licentiousness that liberty of thinking for themselves, which they had gained by the Reformation, and which persecution made them only the more determined to maintain. Sects were multiplied on the most frivolous occasions. And the reformed church polity of England, as far as it had been the work of the Tudor sovereigns, degenerated, under the reign of the Stuart family, into a house divided against itself; disruption and infidelity and immorality prevailing

commonly, where men had reckoned on a revival of true brotherhood together with genuine apostolical Christianity. Such was the state of protestant England, with many notable exceptions of sound faith and fervent piety, during the middle portion of the two centuries before us. Such is ever the course of a merely human energy, however powerful the principle first impelling it, however swift its progress at the outset; it is sure to spend itself, like a projectile retarded by the medium through which it moves, and drawn downwards by the earth to which it properly belongs. But a genuine work of God, wherein man seeks to forward the divine purposes only by divinely ordered means, is like the movement of the heavenly bodies, which pursue their way for ages through ethereal space, with a speed exceeding swift and yet unflagging, and so regulated by the harmony pervading all creation, that we who dwell on one of them are not conscious that it moves. Of work thus heaven-directed, and of workmen meet for it, our highly favored country was not wholly destitute, either in the Reformation era, or in the centuries which ensued. Even when the strife of tongues raged most fiercely, and when afterwards the love of many waxed most cold, there were bishops and pastors, and of their people also not a few, both in the established and the nonconforming churches, who adhered to "the doctrine which is according to godliness;" teaching it with diligence, and acting on it with fidelity. And when the light which such true Christians ever labored to diffuse was most in

danger of suppression, by the prevalence of a spirit sceptical and worldly, there arose Wesley and Whitfield, and Venn and Wilberforce, and their evangelical associates; whose labors gave the English Reformation a fresh impulse, and a new character, of a nature fitted to bear good fruit in perpetuity. For theirs was no strife for this world's wealth and power, either with popes or princes. The great ones of the earth poured contempt upon their holy enterprise; instead of marring it by any incongruous cooperation. Religion, as regarded and enforced by these new reformers, was the work of God's Spirit in the soul of man. And the only test by which every word and deed, either of their own or of their followers, must be tried, as they declared, was the revealed will of the Lord God almighty.

Our attention must now be turned to France as the stronghold of the antagonistic papal religion, and the scene in which its effects may best be studied. For Spain soon lost its position as one of the leading states of Christendom; ruined partly by its debasing greed of gold, and by the waste of men in its gold producing dependencies, and partly by the expulsion of its Moorish subjects, and by the extinction of all manly spirit and intelligence under the extreme pressure of the papal Inquisition. To that pressure France would not slavishly submit. Its despotic sovereigns, jealous of all alien power, prescribed limits to the exercise, within their own dominions, of those very papal usurpations, of which elsewhere they were the foremost champions. In other realms the pope's bulls, now more arrogant

than ever, might have free course ; but not in France. Bulls for deposing princes, or for exterminating heretics, the Index for suppressing literary liberty, the Propaganda for diffusing the Romish creed and superstitions, Jesuit missions for bringing the ends of the earth under the papal yoke, attempts to do the like with the Eastern church authorities, and fresh persecution of the surviving Waldenses,—all these, and other similar devices for regaining the lost supremacy of Rome's triple crowned bishop, that sovereign potentate was welcome to set on foot, with the free consent of the king of France his firm ally ; only not within the king's own dominions, or to the prejudice of his own prerogatives therein. As to matters simply religious, in these the Pope might have it all his own way. But in things pertaining to worldly power, the Gallican church must have its own liberties ; that is to say, the kings and not the Pope would be supreme. The king would himself cleave steadfastly to the papal form of Christianity ; would uphold celibacy in clergy, monks, and nuns, and would seek absolution from a priest for his own adulteries. He would be lavish in expenditure on religious structures, and pomps, and rites, occasionally ; as he was habitually on palaces, court pageantries, and debaucheries. And under this compromise between secular and spiritual authority, there grew up, in the court of Louis XIV., the most repulsive combination of despotism, profligacy, and superstition, of hardness of heart under polish of manners, of worldly glory, shining bright in the

darkness of deepest ignorance as to things divine, that had ever yet done dishonor to the name of Christendom. In the prevalence however of all these abominations, the Huguenots for a time enjoyed to a great extent their covenanted religious freedom ; making the light of the Gospel to shine, however little heeded, amongst a people who were dwelling in the shadow of death. The Edict of Nantes, not yet revoked, had been granted to French protestants, at the close of the sixteenth century, by that Henry of Navarre, who, for state purposes, had the same year turned Romanist himself. The revocation of this edict, some ninety years afterwards, by one of the most unworthy of his successors, was due, like many papal triumphs, to the operations of the confessional. The Jesuit director of the king's conscience, Père la Chaise, gives the following secret history of this odious transaction, in connexion with some "atrocious crime" of which the king had been guilty : "Many a time, when I have had him at confession, I shook hell about his ears, and made him sigh, fear, and tremble ; before I would consent to absolve him." . . . "I set the baseness of the action before him by telling him the story, and how wicked it was, and that it could not be forgiven, till he had done some good action to balance that, and expiate the crime. Whereupon at last he asked me, what he must do ? So I told him that he must root out all heretics from his kingdom."

And thus it came to pass, that throughout France no protestants were allowed thenceforth to mar by

their abhorred presence the exclusive influence of the religion taught from Rome. With hundreds of thousands of the best and most intelligent of its citizens either slaughtered, or imprisoned, or sent to the galleys, or driven into exile, the foremost kingdom in the papal communion had free scope to shew the world, in still more legible characters, if possible, than before, what the Pope's version of the Gospel was calculated to accomplish, in a people who were the observed of all observers, and who set the fashion in manners and customs to all others. The result was, that the exceeding profligacy of the court of Louis XIV. was exceeded by that of the Regent who came next; whilst that of Louis XV. was even worse. Superstition became little better than rank hypocrisy. Vice openly gloried in its shame. Reforms in religion, attempted by the Jansenists, were suppressed by the influence of the Jesuits; whose treacherous intrigues, interfering with state supremacy, soon afterwards provoked the suppression of their own order throughout Christendom. In the absence of the check imposed by these spies and informers, scepticism took courage and became aggressive. Scripture, having been associated with idle tales, and vain human imaginations, was involved in the discredit, which the latter could not but incur, in minds enlightened by Pascal's withering exposure of Jesuitical morality. And there sprang up and flourished in France a band of infidel philosophers; to whom Christianity, seen only in the guise of Romanism, became a mark for

ridicule, and an object of abhorrence, to be denounced everywhere as no better than a rank imposture. At the same time the oppressions under which the people labored, owing to the wasteful expenditure of their rulers, in war, luxury, and debauchery, became ever more and more intolerable. Public credit was exhausted. Monopolies crippled trade in all directions. Taxes were collected on a plan which left half the proceeds in the hands of fraudulent collectors. And the clergy and nobility paid no taxes at all. Property had its rights and its exemptions; but it recognised no duties. The poorer classes supplied the money needed by the state; the richer classes spent it. Under the pressure of this grinding extortion, it is no wonder that there grew up in France a conviction, soon to be spread by a lively sympathy throughout Europe, that labor ought to enjoy a larger share of its own fruits. And here again Gospel truth was turned to worldly purposes. However little the Bible might be known and honored, it was easy to quote texts which forbid grasping and oppression; even as it was before, when secular power fought with clerical for its huge possessions. And in the struggle which now arose, between starving industry and pampered wealth, men forgot, as they had done on the former occasion, that the use of sanguinary violence, for redressing wrongs however grievous, is directly opposed to the whole spirit of Christ's religion. And thus these two centuries were closed with the avenging horrors of the great French Revolution:—Property confiscated,—the

public creditor paid by national bankruptcy,—aristocracy abolished,—the king and royal family treated with every indignity, even unto death,—the reign of terror, with the guillotine at work incessantly, regardless of age, sex, or innocence,—the Sabbath day done away with,—the worship of the goddess of reason, in the person of an abandoned woman, substituted for that of the fictitious queen of heaven,—Rome plundered by a French army, the Pope being carried off by the First Consul to die a prisoner in France,—and the territories of “the eldest son of the church” ceasing for some years to be, properly speaking, any part of Christendom at all.

In concluding this comparison between the two foremost countries protestant and papal, it may be observed, that during these two centuries England passed through a rebellion and a revolution, both originated by a conflict of religious principles; the former bloodstained and regicidal, the latter peaceable and bloodless; and that, after some commotions raised by Romanizing pretenders to its throne, it arrived at a settled order of government, combined with an amount of loyalty and of patriotism, which preserved this country safe, under God’s good providence, when the rest of Europe, in the next century, lay prostrate under the invading hosts of France. During the same period, France, commencing with the most absolute monarchy, was brought at the end to a state of social chaos, under the sovereignty of Jacobin clubs and Parisian mobs. In the protestant realm, men had be-

come less intolerant, less turbulent, and more generally actuated by an improved secondary Christianity; under the influence of a Bible open to all, so far as they were able to procure it, read it, and understand it. In the papal kingdom, the upper classes had become more reckless in evil doing, the lower more rebellious under wrongful suffering. Whilst the ruler of the one country was expressing the wish that every one of his subjects possessed a copy of the Christian Scriptures, the usurper in the other was showing himself ready to turn Mahometan, if he found it likely to answer his own worldly purposes. In the one a pure domestic life was the rule, though not without exceptions; alike in the palace and in the cottage. In the other it was the exception rather than the rule; owing partly to the evil example of the court, partly to the enforced celibacy of the clergy, partly to the license of the prevalent infidelity, and partly to the polluting influences of the confessional. But if in many respects the contrast between the two was very striking, there was a deplorable similarity in others, and these of primary importance. In both mammon reigned supreme; this world's objects taking precedence with the multitude over those of the world which is to come. Witness the extreme eagerness for gold, on the part of all classes, manifested in France by the Mississippi scheme, in England by the South Sea bubble. No such sacrifices at the shrine of mammon as these had ever been offered in the times of heathendom. Witness buccaneering, privateering,

and smuggling; witness forgery, bribery, and jobbery in all departments; to which may be added negro slavery, with the slave trade, and the middle passage; all the above being evil practices either peculiar to Christendom, or carried to a greater height than heretofore by Christians, papal and protestant alike. Meanwhile the love of pleasure kept pace with the love of money; except where the love of God in Christ Jesus availed to supersede and to extinguish both. Witness the licentiousness of the literature of the times; and especially of stage plays, ever patronized by royalty, and ever reflecting the daily life of all classes. Cruel sports were not wanting to minister pleasure to the spectators. Game laws, cruelly put in force, secured amusement, as in feudal times, to the wealthy; at the cost of tempting the poor to crime, and exposing them to a disproportionate severity of punishment. Gambling ruined many that were rich, and impoverished the poor also through the wide spread snares of state lotteries. Duelling was the approved method of settling quarrels between individuals, just as war was, and still is, between nations. And drunkenness was as common and as baneful in the higher orders then as it is amongst the lower orders now. On an impartial survey of the two peoples, here taken as representing the contrasted halves of Christendom, it may be justly held, that if the love of pleasure prevailed to a greater excess in France, the love of money was indulged in to a greater extent in England. But for the final adjustment of the scales it must

be added, that in the former country the New Testament was a sealed book to the devout, and to a large part of the community a myth; whereas in the latter, its moral precepts, if no other portions, were familiar as household words. Men are responsible for their conduct according to their light. And we can derive little satisfaction from the place assignable to England, as the result of this whole comparison, when we remember the emphatic words of the apostle, "Wherefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTENDOM ; IN THE PRESENT CENTURY. CENTURY 19.

THE difference between Christ's kingdom here on earth, as set before us in the New Testament, and Christendom as actually existing, may have been more easy to be discerned in past ages ; but it never was in reality greater, never more irreconcilable, as will be seen on due comparison, than in the much vaunted nineteenth century. In former times it was a contrast of light with darkness. Now it is one of light with light ; of the light of heaven with that of earth ; of God's wisdom, grace, and love, with man's imaginations and devices. There is on the one hand an increased number of believers, who apprehend intelligently the whole counsel of God for their salvation, and who lead a life in accordance with those principles of holiness, which are termed in Scripture " The truth as it is in Jesus : " this must be most thankfully acknowledged. But on the other hand, owing to the greater diffusion of general intelligence, the multitude of unbelievers throughout Christendom embraces in greater numbers than ever previously, men of cultivated minds, and many proficient in those branches of art and

science, invention and discovery, for which this period is eminently distinguished. Even astronomy, which seemed almost perfected previously, has made advances which might render Newton proud of his disciples. And in other branches of physical science, not only has great progress been made by their ardent votaries, but moreover great practical advantages have been brought home to the unscientific masses of mankind. Such researches as those of spectrum analysis, one of the last, and not least promising of these new discoveries, may as yet have charms for students only. But it would not be easy to find any family in Christendom, however sequestered its habitation, which has not derived some gain or pleasure from the steam engine in its various applications, including steam navigation, and railway locomotion, or from telegraphy, which vanquishes time as well as space, or from photography, which supplies every one, on easy terms, with the beloved lineaments of the distant and the dead. The like may be said, to some extent, of our increased facilities for correspondence, and of turning night into day by means of gas, and of those anæsthetic appliances, which relieve surgery from the chiefest of its terrors, not only for its patients, but for as many as are liable to become subject to its operations. For all such elements of material prosperity we may well be deeply thankful; as rendering life more enjoyable, and its evils more supportable. But at the same time they make it harder for those who are in the flesh to walk devotedly by faith in the unseen.

To "replenish the earth, and subdue it," these were indeed amongst the earliest duties imposed on man and his posterity, by that great Author of their being, who fitted all that is within their reach for doing them good service. But to man fallen, redeemed, and sanctified, came afterwards a commandment, which though quite consistent with the former one, directs our affections to objects of infinitely more worth, in the language following: "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The contrast between the pursuit of these diverse objects of man's affection is the characteristic of the nineteenth century now chiefly to be considered.

Of all "the things that are in the world" power is the most attractive, as giving the command of most things else; and is so for its own sake also to minds likely to influence the largest numbers of mankind. And this century opens in the midst of the greatest contest ever carried on by force of arms in Christendom, for the power of universal empire. The unwearied energy of the French revolution had been directed by the genius of a Corsican adventurer to the furtherance of his own overweening ambition. And a people who had committed unheard of outrages, by way of compassing their freedom, and in the hope of sharing abundance with one another on terms of brotherly equality, became submissive lieges of an imperial master; and were so infected with his thirst for military glory, as to acquiesce cheerfully in being decimated by the conscriptions, and

pauperized by the exactions, to which his selfish policy exposed them. Millions of lives, and hundreds of millions of treasure, were wasted, throughout Europe, year after year, for the gratification of one indomitable will. Every throne in papal realms, including the pope's own, was overturned, as well as those of some protestant princes, and a pope was once more carried captive into France; all in order that this one man might be exalted above every others, that his kinsmen might wear the crowns of Naples, Spain, Holland, and Westphalia, that he might have a pontiff to bless the crown which no hands but his own might put on his own head, and that he might share the lofty empire of his own achieving with a daughter of the proud house of Hapsburg, whilst his faithful first wife was still alive; and finally, that in the character of incarnate selfishness he might prove the vanity of all worldly glory by dying an exile on the rock of St Helena. To the crimes of this first Napoleon, committed on a large scale, must be added others of singular atrocity, affecting individuals, or comparatively small numbers. Amongst these may be mentioned, as particularly execrable, the massacre of prisoners of war at Jaffa, the treacherous and cruel treatment of the heroic Toussaint, the rebel's death allotted to the patriotic Hoffer, and the kidnapping, mock trial, and nocturnal execution, of the last prince of the house of Condé. But the most serious of all the evils, which this baneful scion of the French revolution inflicted upon Christendom, consisted neither in the amount of physical

suffering which his schemes for self aggrandisement produced, nor in the many obstacles which they presented to improvements whether material or social. It lay in the tendency of his successes, whilst they lasted, to corrupt the moral sentiments of the beholders; to blunt their power of discerning right from wrong; and to incline them to esteem as truly great a character the reverse of truly good. Even in the generation which most suffered by his intense pursuit of his own advancement, he was idolized for his talents and achievements, not only throughout his own realms, but by multitudes in the very countries most opposed to his designs. Even amongst the détenus, those hapless English travellers in France, on whom he wreaked his wrath on the rupture of the peace of Amiens, keeping them in durance, to the number of about ten thousand, during more than ten weary years, some returned to their homes in England full of the praise of their imperial custodian. So fascinating in man's sight is transcendent power; however unjustifiably acquired, however unscrupulously abused! So mistaken was the estimate of human greatness formed in the light of secondary Christianity, after the superhuman greatness of Christ Jesus, in a career of self sacrificing love, had been set as a pattern before the world during eighteen hundred years!

It was in the midst of this contest on the part of France for supreme power, and of the rest of Europe for independence, that Russia took its present rank amongst European states of the first order; having

in fact contributed to the defeat of the aggressor, by its patriotic hosts and by the severity of its climate, more than any of the rest, excepting indeed England by its gold subsidies to others, and by its own victories of Trafalgar and Waterloo, whereof one annihilated the navy of the enemy, and the other his last grand army. And Russia, it must be observed, had long since become the only thriving branch of the Greek church; the only community which conferred any worldly influence or credit on that diminished half of ancient Christendom. Not that there was any very close connexion between the parent community in the East, and its distant offspring in the North. The latter was wholly independent of the former. At Constantinople the patriarch was nominated, and still is, strange to say, by the Mahometan Sultan. But in Russia the Czar is his own pontiff; pope and emperor of Russia all in one, with an ecclesiastical synod of his own appointing. In the exercise of these joint prerogatives, temporal and spiritual, the Czar Peter, amongst his other great reforms, did something towards remedying the gross abuses of a church, which has many superstitions in common with those of Rome. And in respect of these corruptions, as well as in the ignorance of the people, and until recently in their serfdom, Russia has been so far behind the average of Christendom, as to have had no appreciable influence on its character, except in camps and battlefields. In ambition indeed it has shown itself no less grasping than its neighbours. And after the close of the great European war, it was

ready to turn its disciplined forces against the free inhabitants of the Caucasus; France pursuing a like course in Algeria, and England in the far East; to the well merited but only temporary discomfiture of all three aggressive powers. The first use however which the triumphant sovereigns made of the independence they had so hardly achieved was to join together, especially Russia, Austria, and Prussia, in a Holy Alliance, as they termed it; in a league for upholding one another in their despotisms, and for suppressing that revolutionary spirit, which the French Empire and its aggressions had smothered for a time, but had by no means extinguished. It soon burst out in a second French revolution, and afterwards in a third; the latter communicating its volcanic influences throughout the greater part of Europe. And although matters were hushed up temporarily, and another Napoleon, by another massacre in the streets of Paris, established in that focus of insurrection a second French empire based upon the credit of the first, still the tendency to resist authority was everywhere fermenting, especially where authority was most abused; and with it was joined a determination on the part of the working classes to have less work, and better wages, and to assert their right to a larger measure of this world's power, with a view to enjoying more of its good things.

Now there can be no question as to the general tendency of the Bible, both Old Testament and New, being strongly in favor of the authority of established rulers in the state. But whilst loyal

obedience is impressed on subjects, as their bounden duty, it is no less clearly enjoined on sovereigns to watch that they exercise no oppressive lordship, but ever act as upright and gracious administrators of equal and righteous laws. In like manner it is past question, that Scripture sanctions the rights of property most explicitly; and indeed without their general recognition nothing could hinder the idle and the improvident from preying always, as they now do frequently, on the industrious and the frugal. And yet here again the spirit of both Testaments is wholly opposed to the accumulation of enormous possessions in few hands, side by side with such pressure of extreme poverty on multitudes, as cannot but incapacitate them for self culture, if not also for self respect. In these matters, as in many others, the word of God makes a twofold provision for accomplishing its ends in man's well being; and for harmonizing, as far as possible, the disparities incidental to the diverse natural gifts of individuals, and the various ranks of every orderly society. And how different might have been the present state of Christendom, had but its sovereigns, when re-seated on their thrones, manifested a new interest in the welfare of their subjects; and done their utmost to promote liberty, civil and religious, and to substitute, throughout their realms, mutual help and intelligent brotherly kindness, for competition, and class jealousies and oppressions! How much more favorable would be the prospects of society at present, had the wealthy and the prosperous of generations now gone to their account, instead of

seeking to increase their substance, or habitually devoting all they had to their own selfish uses, been forward in expending their perilous superfluity on objects tending to raise towards their own level the depressed myriads of their poorer neighbours! But since these plain openings for Christian beneficence were neglected by those who had the best means of knowing their duty, it need be no matter of surprise, that political revolution has been one of the most noticeable characteristics of Christendom in the nineteenth century. Even before the one which put an end to the Bourbon reign in France, the Spanish colonies throughout America had become republics; and Greece had cast off the yoke of Turkey. Then came the third eruption of the French republican volcano; and lo, an empire constructed upon universal suffrage! Rome itself became once more a republic; soon to be brought back under the sway of its papal sovereign by republican France. Most of the states of Germany underwent great convulsions. Russia was agitated by the general commotion. Italy has since gained the liberty and unity for which it long sighed in vain. And last of all even bigoted Spain drove into exile its shameless queen, although fresh decked with the Pope's golden rose; and has ever since been seeking to fit itself with a king after the modern pattern;—one willing to reign as the delegate of his subjects, and to make his government the expression of the numerical majority.

In this seething of the nations, it cannot fail to be observed, that whilst material prosperity has

been the object of universal pursuit, the chief means relied upon for success have been of a purely secular nature, civil or political; and that considerations of a religious or ecclesiastical character have had far less weight than in past ages throughout Christendom. This has been the case very remarkably, in the recent rejection of the yoke of Rome, by Italy, and Austria, and Spain; in which countries, the superstitions of Rome's religion still prevail in private use, but are no longer allowed to dictate to national life. The fact is, that state rulers have become impatient of clerical interference, in matters held to belong exclusively to Cæsar and his successors. And whilst treating the clergy with much of the old traditional respect, they value them, rather as helpers in maintaining the order of society, than as ambassadors of a King eternal in the heavens, messengers of a peace which this world cannot give. The clergy also, on their parts, with their revenues much diminished, and their independence of the state called in question, if not actually repudiated, have been generally willing to act in this capacity of peace officers; for which they are predisposed by their own principles in favor of authority. But so much the more are the people apt to look on them with suspicion, as hostile to their own dearly cherished projects, for bettering their condition by political reforms. And as revolution has followed revolution throughout Christendom, the ministers of the current secondary Christianity have lost as much of their influence by the ascendancy of the popular element, as they had lost

before by the predominance of despotic princes. This has happened especially in the realms of protestants; where the abuses of religious liberty, and the enforcement of uniformity to the detriment of true unity, have enfeebled established churches, and have rendered divisions, and the evils thence ensuing, the greatest scandals to the cause of the Reformation. In papal realms the case has been somewhat different. For no sooner was the Pope replaced upon the altar of St Peter's, than he reinstated the Inquisition, and reestablished the order of the Jesuits; being well aware that in union is strength, and hoping to compass it by suppressing free discussion. By these means, and by other devices in habitual use at Rome, he has labored with all diligence to bring back his lost provinces, and England above all others, as having contributed most towards his restoration, into subjection under his paternal authority, and participation of his much prized mediæval darkness. He has had in his favor the force of long prescription, and all those frailties of man's fallen nature, for which his form of faith supplies the most acceptable compromise. Nevertheless even the Pope himself has been unable to escape the position of peace officer in chief, to certain of his lieges amongst the crowned heads of Europe. And even if all the bishops of the world in council were to decree the infallibility of His Holiness, this would not affect the cogency of such facts as these;—that his spiritual supremacy is recognized by few except priests, and women, and priest ridden men;

and that he is maintained on the tottering throne of his temporal power by an imperial ally, who cares little either for his blessings or his anathemas, except as they may render a certain portion of the French people more amenable to the personal government of their master.

The territorial extent of Christendom on the continent of America must not be lost sight of, in connexion with the subject now before us. Omitting the large tracts which are still European colonies, the new world has been the theatre of revolutions quite as much as the old one, during recent times. Moreover the relations between the clergy and state rulers, and those between rich and poor, have followed the same general course as here; and for the most part with an accelerated velocity. And the like may be said of the papal and the protestant religions, and of their influence on their respective adherents. When we reflect that four centuries ago this huge quarter as we term it of our globe, was unknown to European Christians, and the very name of Christ unknown to its numerous tribes and races, it is impossible not to contemplate with profound regret American Christendom as it actually is; on contrasting it with what it might have been, had the Gospel which it learned from Europe been preached to its docile people in the terms which angels used in first announcing it, as "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." In the present condition of that new world, considered politically, republics prevail everywhere;

with the exception of the one empire of Brazil; which itself has in point of form a free constitution. But in these republics liberty means that every man must have his share of ruling power, over and above security of person, of property, and of the rights of conscience. And thus understood, a representative government implies the same proportion of ignorance and selfishness in the representatives as in those whom they represent. As to religious and moral progress, the contrast between true Christianity and its feebly reflected rays, in the papal portions of America, corresponds with that of light and darkness in the mediæval times. Life is for the most part spent in selfish indulgences, slightly modified by abject superstitions, or directly sanctioned by infidelity in the heart. The United States, although no religion is therein established, must be regarded, on the whole, as the chief American representative of protestant Christendom. And there, as here, the contrast between the Gospel and the Christianity which prevails instead of it, is one of light with light. The light of arts and sciences, of secular education, and of commercial enterprise, the radiance of unprecedented material progress, and of the glory which waits on power in prosperity, all this brightness is of the earth, earthy. At the same time there has undoubtedly been developed, in that energetic race of our kinsmen, no small amount of genuine piety, no insignificant addition, as we may reasonably hope, to the number of those who constitute Christ's true kingdom upon earth. But on the whole the lust of power, and the love of

money, still predominate as notably on their side of the Atlantic as on ours. For proof it may suffice to mention the displacement or extinction of the aboriginal races, the annexation of Texas, the repudiation of state debts, the general spirit of almost frantic speculation, and the recent civil war commenced by the Southern States because they could not carry the election of a president of their own, and slavery, so long sanctioned by the Northern States for the sake of gain, and at length abolished chiefly for the sake of victory. It is true that in those realms this worldly spirit has not arrayed the lower classes against the higher, as it has done in the present century throughout Europe. But this is partly because there are neither nobles there to provoke jealousy, nor princes; and partly because the wide extent of unexhausted soil easily supplies ample food for the fast increasing population. But the abundance, which in the United States leaves less occasion for pauperism than in the mother country, has not always wrought a corresponding amount of thankfulness to the Author of all good gifts. Fulness of bread, there as elsewhere, has given rise to more than common pride of heart. And that thriving people have yet to learn, most of them, how true it is, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

That these sure marks of Christ's true kingdom have been discernible to an increased extent, during the present century, throughout no small part of Christendom in both America and Europe must be

thankfully admitted. And especially in our own country have they been so plainly manifested, that although the case of England has been reserved throughout this chapter for the next, as far as possible, it cannot be altogether omitted in the slight summing up of the nineteenth century results here attempted. Amongst the evidences of the growth of genuine Christianity we might dwell on the zeal with which the Gospel has been spread abroad by truly Christian missionaries; or on the pains taken by Societies, often anathematized by the Pope, in translating the Holy Scriptures, and disseminating them throughout the world in all known languages. We might also point to the various attempts that have been made, all hitherto abortive, to organize a church truly apostolical; one in which sound doctrine, and holy practice, and brotherly communion, should commend the truth of the Gospel to an unbelieving world, as was the case in the times of the apostles. But perhaps the most striking evidence of an increase of true religion, next to the influence of individual Christian lives, is the great improvement manifested in that reflected secondary Christianity, which constitutes the rule of faith and practice, in the mingled masses of even the most exemplary communities in Christendom. Let the abolition of the slave trade, and the suppression of slavery, however obstinately resisted, and at length achieved by agencies however diverse in kind, stand foremost as clear proofs of this improvement. Amongst others may be also mentioned the mitigation of

sanguinary penal laws,—prison discipline reformed and made reformatory,—cruel sports to a great extent abolished,—the practice of duelling much abated, and state lotteries nearly everywhere discontinued, the pope's dominions being amongst the last in which this method of raising revenue has been maintained. Greatly increased attention paid to the education of all classes is an indication of a more Christian sense of duty, in regard to the nurture of the young; suggesting a hope, that the time may yet arrive when Christians will be aware, that baptism is a maimed rite and no valid token of discipleship, unless conjoined with the training of the baptized in all that Christ has commanded to be observed. Another of the most Christian like undertakings of the century is sanitary reform. For family life is God's ordinance; and light, water, and fresh air are God's gifts freely bestowed in full sufficiency for all. And these cannot be withheld or stinted without injury to health of body, and serious detriment to the home habits of those who live in crowded and unhealthy dwellings. The presence of some Christian sentiment is indicated also even in the aspirations of red republicans, as embodied in the watchword of the latest French revolution. For what language could better express the basis of a truly Christian society, than "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity;" supposing these terms duly understood? Who but Christ can make truly free? Where but in his gospel are men all put upon an equal footing, as being all alike lost in sin, alike redeemed in Christ, and alike

bound to love each other, and to work for each other's good, as brethren in Christ Jesus?

But mingled with all this good it has been seen what a preponderance of evil still remains. New developments of worldly spirit have been also manifested in the operations, often fraudulent, of huge joint stock companies,—in the adulteration of almost every article of human food,—in noxious and demoralizing trades,—and in other like symptoms of a general haste to grow rich, as the first object of life, be the second what it may. In most instances the second seems to have been the selfish enjoyment of pleasures chiefly sensual. The race course, with some of the worst of its excitements communicated far and wide to those who never saw a race,—the theatre with its demoralizing accompaniments, from the opera and its ballet on Saturday night, frequented by many who appear in church on Sunday morning, down to the penny gaff for street arabs and their associates,—gambling houses, in the guise of clubs, for the wealthy,—tippling houses, and gin palaces, for the poor,—these and similar provisions for enjoying pernicious pleasure, either are new, or have been greatly enlarged in the present century. The loving the praise of man more than the praise of God has been shown no less signally, in the supremacy of fashion, however preposterous, and in its rapid communication from the highest grade of society to the lowest,—in emulation made everywhere the chief stimulant in educating the young,—and in the eager pursuit of the kind of glory that is achieved in warfare.

As to warfare besides what has been said already in this chapter, it may here be added, that among the brilliant inventions of the age, those applicable to use in war occupy no small space. Swords and spears used to suffice for mortal combat, during thousands of years. Next came guns and cannons of simple structure, which did well enough for some centuries. But of late, smooth bores have become rifles, and rifles breech loaders, and pistols revolvers; with new shapes of shot, and new kinds of shells, for various forms of rifled cannon, besides torpedoes, and new materials for explosion, and new kinds of metal to bear increased explosive tension. And the contest between the novel implements of destruction, and the novel plated armour for defence of shipping and of forts, is still going on, in a time of profound peace, experimentally; with as much zeal, and skill, and almost as much expenditure, as would have sufficed for an ordinary war in times of old.

Neither, alas! are these the only evil contentions known to Christendom, in this epoch of its superior intelligence. Religious disunion never produced more scandalous animosities than when there has seemed to be so much of earnest religious conviction. How can we expect secular wars to cease amongst nations, whilst controversies the most envenomed, and divisions the most unwarranted, are the normal state of churches? Never were sects multiplied more wantonly, never were their aberrations from the standard of God's word more wild, than during the enlightened half cen-

tury last past. Even educated protestants, in England and in Germany, have left the religion of the Bible for that of the Pope; some of them joining, and others longing to join, that church of the Pope's founding, which he has lately pronounced to be "stronger than heaven." Under a delusion little less to be deplored, considerable numbers of the uneducated, chiefly protestants, on both sides of the Atlantic, have become believers in the Book of Mormon; and have actually established, at no small cost of self sacrifice, a large Mormonite community in the wilds of America. Such gross instances of perversion and apostacy, not only from sound faith but from the dictates of plain reason and common sense, suggest to every one the seasonable warning: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and render apposite to our times, above all others, the reproofing sentence of our Lord, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

CHAPTER XL

CHRISTENDOM ; ENGLISH, IN THE PRESENT ERA.
A.D. 1870.

THE present year of grace, 1870, has been inaugurated by a ceremony highly creditable to Christendom ; which has no precedent in the past, and is pregnant with unusual promise for the future. In the early part of its first month, the remains of a great man, whose greatness was of an order strange to Christendom, were on their way from the shores of England to those of the United States, on board a British man of war, commissioned for this especial service of national respect ; and escorted by state vessels of his native country. Moreover in England his funeral rites were attended by the Queen's prime minister, and those in America by one of her royal sons. How came it to pass, that honors so exceptional were paid by two mighty nations, to George Peabody ; whose birth was ignoble, and whose princely fortune was made in trade and banking ? Simply because his bountifulness, during his life time, was exceptionally large towards the people of both lands ; and was directed, out of pure philanthropy, to helping others to help themselves, by promoting their education, and contributing to the

improvement of their homes. Such was the character, which England, in conjunction with her descendants in America, has shown herself delighted to honor. Such is the way of spending superfluous wealth, which has hitherto been so rare in Christendom, as to draw down on itself this unprecedented public recognition, by the two most money making nations in the world. And yet the Christian Scriptures ought long since to have made this one man's course of action an ordinary practice. For there we find laid down clearly the proper principle of almsgiving for every one to adopt, namely, that each should give "as God hath prospered him ;"—a principle incompatible with the permanent accumulation of enormous properties ; since the most prosperous must give, not merely more than others, but in a much larger proportion to their means. Insomuch that whilst a tenth part or less of a straitened income might in many cases be ample alms to give, yet where the means are tenfold greater, to give twenty fold, or even fifty fold, would not be too much. Then as to the channels of such bountiful expenditure, prevention of evil is to be preferred to curing it ; and doing to others as we would have them do to us is a golden rule for all. The great American philanthropist had himself experienced the disadvantages of straitened lodgings, and of a limited education ; and he sought to ward off these evils, by his bounty, from as many of his fellow creatures as he could. If this example were largely followed by the wealthy, and if the poorer classes would avail themselves of the oppor-

tunities for self help which would then abound, the barrier of distrust and apprehension, which now estranges the employed from the employer, would be superseded by the bond of mutual kindly offices. And if the two foremost naval powers in the world would agree to employ their fleets on no errands less pacific than this, in which they sailed for the first time in concert and alliance, their joint influence would go far to promote peace amongst all nations. And warfare might then become, together with slavery, a thing of the past, to be abhorred of all men; instead of being, as it has been from the beginning of Christendom, at once its pride, its scandal, and its scourge.

England has been for some time treading, though with feeble and faltering steps, in these converging paths of enlightened benevolence,—the education of the people, and sanitary reform; two movements, of which it would be hard to overestimate the favourable influence, political and social, moral and religious, on all those whose welfare they affect. For nothing can ever elevate the lower classes, except with their own cordial cooperation. And nothing except mental cultivation, and moral training, can fit them for the task of self elevation. And only in decent homes can children practise the good habits they learn at school. And unless the progress of events is to be reversed, and pure despotism is once more to hold Christendom in bondage, there is no conceivable security for the maintenance of social order, except in redressing the grievances, and improving the condition, of the teeming masses

of the population. Although England has not been actually convulsed by any such revolution as most of her neighbours have gone through, yet this country has not escaped the contagion of the revolutionary spirit. Here as elsewhere there has been a disposition in the working classes to rise against those who pay the wages of their work ; a spirit prompted by the conviction, that they have not had their fair share of this world's goods ; and which has sought to compass its ends, sometimes by trade unions and strikes, sometimes by riots of a revolutionary character, but chiefly by more peaceable efforts, directed to the reform, as they conceive it, of our political institutions. These were worldly objects, to be compassed by worldly means ; and they have been often counteracted by measures no less worldly, on the part of those who sought to maintain their own existing ascendancy. But it is a gross mistake to imagine that society can be radically reformed by any change in its regulations, however well devised, as long as those at whose instance, and for whose benefit, they are framed, are unwilling to reform their own personal evil habits. Whilst working men persist in spending a large portion of their earnings in baneful self indulgences, and can point to men of capital as doing the like, after their own fashion, with their much larger incomes, their mutual estrangement, and the injuries thereby inflicted on each other, can never be mitigated by shifting power from one class to its opponent ; especially if this be the class that is least educated, and in circumstances the least conducive to inde-

pendence. Moreover it may be held with reason, that the chief of the evils now incident to the condition of that class is not a privation of their share of physical comforts; for it is rarely that these are wanting where a man is sober, honest, frugal, and industrious. Rather it is their great deficiency, in contrast with the higher classes, in mental culture and refinement, partly for want of leisure, partly for lack of opportunity, this it is which chiefly severs poor from rich, as if they were of two races or two castes; interfering with a right understanding between them, as well as with sympathy, intercourse, and brotherly communion;—except, indeed, when both are animated by that genuine Christian faith, which inspires all, of whatsoever class, who are one in Christ, with true fellowship one towards another. But this very fellowship, and the faith from which it springs, though they may make the poor contented with their lot, render the rich incapable of enjoying their own abundance, without imparting it, as far as practicable, to their poorer brethren.

It is recorded of Henry IV. of France, that he gave utterance to the following resolution: “I will so manage matters, that every peasant in my kingdom may eat meat each day of the week, and may put a fowl in the pot each Sunday.” And if this king’s memory was long held in most affectionate remembrance by the French people, it was largely owing to the fact, that he actually did much to give effect to his kind intentions; not only by strict economy in the finances of the state, but by

retrenching the expenditure of his court, and his own personal expenses. That this kingly purpose might be now realized in England is past question; if the like self denial, for the benefit of others, were practised by all who possess more than they need to spend upon themselves. With our mineral resources, and our agricultural skill, our manufacturing preeminence, and the profits of our commerce, our free trade in corn and other articles of food, with all these things, and with the income we derive from loans due to us from other countries, in excess of what we owe them, so great is the amount of wealth in England, that it would supply nearly twice over all the wants of our population. And certainly if these great riches were but somewhat more equally divided, it would seem impossible that any actual want should exist throughout the realm. But it would be a fatal error to suppose that this consummation, however much to be desired, is to be forwarded by violence of any kind. Physical force, directed to any such object, or even threatened, has proved that it can destroy credit, and lock up capital, or drive it away to other quarters, and inflict injury on employers of labor; but it never yet did any good service in bettering the condition of the employed. Legislation can do but little, compared with self restraint and mutual forbearance on the part of individuals. Government may serve for fencing the field upon which men work; but the soil will yield its fruits only to the industry and skill of those who cultivate it. Our Poor laws are a case in point. They

do in fact give to the very poorest a first charge on all the lands and tenements in England; so that no human being should be destitute of shelter, food, and clothing. But the misapplication of these laws, on the part both of those who administer them, and of those in whose behalf they are administered, prevents all due recognition of the kind consideration for the poor to which they owe their origin. Savings' Banks, and some few other similar state aids and appliances, are efforts in the right direction, on the part of those who make and execute our laws. But none of these things are of much avail in practice, except so far as the people make due use of them. Even the most hopeful of them all, our sanitary and educational reforms, may prove abortive, unless appreciated by the classes for whose benefit they are devised. Healthy dwellings may be constructed ever so carefully, and fitted with all the requisites of a decent habitation, and yet be rejected by those for whose use they have been prepared, through their preferring the crowded lodging house and the beer shop. And many a school has been erected, and supplied with able teachers; wherein, owing to the little value which parents attach to these advantages, the attendance of the children is so irregular, and their stay so short, that they learn little more than a mere worthless smattering of reading, writing, and arithmetic. And thus with all our agencies for doing good, and all the zeal of late expended in forwarding their efficiency, we make little real progress in bridging that great gulf, between the very

rich and the very poor, which is one of the most painful proofs, that neither is our English Christendom, even now, the true kingdom of our Saviour, nor our Christianity other than a reflection, more bright in some respects than hitherto, of the genuine light of the Gospel.

England has undoubtedly enjoyed highly favorable opportunities for adopting a truly Christian polity, both in church and state. In its insular independence, in its constitutional monarchy, in its exemption from invasions and revolutions, in its alliance between the functions of secular and spiritual authority, and, above all, in its recognition of the Bible, as grafted into the law of the land, it has had great scope for developing in practice the ideal of a Christian society; had but rulers and people been fully bent upon so doing. And then might have been seen a brotherhood of believers, duly organized as an orderly community under Christ; corresponding with the apostle's account of united Christians, as "holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." The increase of our country, in population and in wealth, has indeed been marvellous; but it little tallies with the kind of growth which is set before us in this vivid figurative description of what Christian society ought to be. Some indeed persuade themselves, that the end so much to be desired has been attained, by the establishment of a national church, purporting to be

moulded on the apostolic pattern ; and declaring, in its articles, that holy Scripture contains everything that man needs to know and do in order to salvation. But taking our country as a whole, in its religious aspect, instead of being united, it is a house divided against itself ; the church and state jealous of each other, churchmen and nonconformists in antagonism, and the emissaries of Rome gaining strength by the divisions which they have ever labored to exasperate ; themselves constituting one more element of dissent, to scandalize the multitude of the ungodly. As to the established church, nearly all the blemishes left on it, when it emerged from papal bondage, have been rather cherished by its rulers with mistaken fondness, than carefully and thoroughly removed. By its intolerance it has driven many from its communion, whom it would have done well to retain. And in its lack of discipline it retains many, whom it ought either to reclaim or to put away. As to its laity, they are altogether excluded from its councils, in its convocation now all but obsolete ; and they have been little encouraged, till of late, to take an active part in any of its proceedings. The services of its parochial clergy have been great, and manifold ; their homes, everywhere to be met with, usually exercising a beneficial influence on all around, independently of their pastoral ministrations. But they are apt to form too much of a distinct caste from the laity ; whilst at the same time they are kept at a much greater distance from their episcopal rulers, than is warranted by the difference in their

church orders. For in fact the bench of bishops act much as if taken all together they constituted a kind of papal head to the Church of England; not indeed claiming it to be infallible, but rarely acknowledging that it has erred, and steadfastly resisting all overtures for its self amendment. Retaining some vestiges of their medieval state, our bishops still dwell in palaces, act as prelates to the order of the garter, and sit on thrones in the house of God. As peers of parliament, they occupy the only seats in the legislature allotted to the clerical body. And in that capacity, they have been little noted for protesting against unjustifiable wars, or unchristian state diplomacy; or for promoting such amendments in our laws, as factory acts, sanitary regulations, the mitigation of our penal code, free trade in human food, the abolition of rotten boroughs, or even the act for improving the position of working curates. Who that venerates a scriptural episcopate but must feel regret, that not names episcopal, but only those of laymen, are associated with such reforms as these? And who but wonders, that the ill advised Pan-Anglican Synod should come together from all quarters, and then separate, without doing anything to conciliate our severed fellow protestants, and indeed without doing anything to any good purpose whatsoever?

It is to divines of its established church that England owes not only many valuable works on the text and exposition of Holy Scripture, but also the justly and generally valued English authorized version of the Bible. But this was holding up a light

to its own defects ; such for instance as the Romish phrases still retained in its formularies, and the Romish intolerance still practised by its functionaries, its reading the Apocrypha in the congregation out of the same volume as the Bible, just as Romanists might do, and dressing its ministers in habiliments like to theirs. Here was provocation to the spirit of nonconformity ; a spirit as resolute in objecting to matters of slight importance, as church rulers were in imposing them for terms of communion. Hence arose the thriving nonconformist communities of the present day ; which take their stand professedly on Scripture principles, without any regard to traditional interpretations, on a preference of spirit to form, on a repudiation of all priestcraft, and on a rejection, until quite lately, of all æsthetic helps to devotion. Every attempt made to reconcile brethren thus estranged has only added to the strife, and brought the peace-makers under suspicion of lax principles. And so violently are the two parties opposed, that whereas our church rulers recognize the orders of a Romish priest, transmitted through ten centuries of idolatry, they count for laymen such Christian ministers as Chalmers and Robert Hall. On the other hand many protestant nonconformists make no scruple of joining hands with the advocates of the papacy, for the sake of damaging the national establishment. The extent to which Christian influence for the renovation of society is frustrated by these animosities, amongst those who might most successfully exert it, is past all human calculation. And nothing can

more plainly show the secondary nature of our current Christianity, than the general acquiescence in a state of permanent estrangement, with occasional acts of direct hostility, between those who profess to walk by the same rule of faith, and to love the same Lord Jesus in sincerity. Amongst the dissentient communities, that which represents the papal interests in England is by far the most inveterate in its enmity to all others, however readily it may avail itself of the aid of any of them, against the chief object of its aversion, the established church. Its intrigues for the recovery of Romish ascendancy in this country are incessant. It works our liberal institutions most adroitly, for the restoration of its unmitigated despotism. It supplies a considerable proportion of the reporters for the press ; whereby the public is day by day led insensibly to see things in a Romanist point of view. It gains perverts by such Romish sophistry as pervades • the Tracts for the Times ; and by such arguments as that Protestantism is negative, which indeed it is, just as light is negative of darkness, and heaven is negative of hell. Its cause is forwarded by some in the high places of our protestant church ; who retain their dignities and emoluments notwithstanding. And when the vile literature of its confessional is disclosed to Englishmen, in their own language, it has its tools ready drilled to put down free discussion by a riot ; and then contrives to shift the blame and the penalty of rioting upon those who simply speak a truth it cannot gainsay. But its chief triumphs are in unhappy Ireland ; un-

happy in having free institutions, which it can abuse, but knows not how to use. In that sister island no government, for many a year past, has made it practicable for a Romanist to adopt the reformed faith, except at the risk of persecution unto death. And amongst a people who persistently use trial by jury for screening proved assassins from conviction, England has been lately indulging its genuine but misdirected love of justice, by confiscating the property of its best friends, in order to satisfy its disaffected subjects, and to make its peace with priests, cardinals, and pope. Yet the feeling of the English people, in the main, was probably never more averse to the pretensions of the papacy than at present. And when the monument to Martin Luther was lately set up at Worms, the heart of the country was ready to join in this telegraphic message, which its beloved queen sent to the king of Prussia: "Pray express, to the committee for the erection of the Luther memorial, my most hearty congratulations upon the successful completion of their task. Protestant England cordially sympathizes upon an occasion, which unites the protestant princes and peoples of Germany."

But to turn from church affairs to those of state, if in the former dissension has been the chief hindrance to progress, party spirit has been no less baneful in the latter; being of all maladies incidental to free constitutions that for which it is hardest to find an antidote. And certainly our church divided against itself has not been in a position to rebuke politicians for sacrificing principle to party con-

siderations. Antagonistic protestant communities, which may be best reckoned as sections of one wantonly divided church, vying with each other for influence in the state, have been more apt to flatter statesmen in their misdoings, than to charge them to amend their ways. Thus it came to pass that England plunged, without remonstrance from its religious guides, into the war to force on China the abhorred commerce in a demoralizing drug; and into the war to support our colonists in encroaching on the land of the New Zealanders, the most hopeful of all converts to the gospel in modern times. The like unscrupulous spirit of encroachment has been at work in other portions of our overgrown empire. The prospect of missionary success, under such circumstances, may be estimated from the following language of one of our colonial bishops, when busily engaged in collecting money in England for church purposes at the Cape of Good Hope: "For the Hottentots I feel that I may fairly plead. They are the aboriginal owners and possessors of the country in which we now dwell; and yet at this day they have scarcely a foot of land which they can call their own." Nor is the love of power less manifest in the eagerness with which party politics are pursued by nearly all classes in the mother country. And what can be more demoralizing politically, than to sympathize with our party leaders, when they snatch at a paltry triumph, and transitory gain, by the most barefaced sacrifices of consistency;—as when conservatives introduce household suffrage,—or when liberals play into the hands of the

papal party, at the very time when it is announcing, at its head quarters, that it is as implacable a foe as ever to all civil and religious liberty? Political coloring of any shade would be wholly out of place in a sketch of Christendom viewed in Scripture light. But inasmuch as politics form the daily food of English life, it has been unavoidable to say thus much concerning them; in order to shew, how little amongst ourselves they correspond with that harmony between the diverse members of one body, which renders each, whilst vitally connected with the head, at once subject to its direction, and serviceable to all the rest.

It is in private life that England may perhaps be seen to most advantage, owing to the large number of families therein enjoying competence or abundance, together with leisure for mental cultivation; and fulfilling conscientiously many of the duties of home and neighbourhood. And very many of such homes there are, over and above those met with in its parsonages, which act as centres of intelligence and benevolence; to the great gain, both material and spiritual, of all those who dwell around them. Yet even in favored spots like these are found traces unmistakeable of that mammon worship, which here takes the place of bowing down to images. Money is seen rushing to embrace money; and sometimes in its haste making a false step into the gulf of ruin; even where the love of it is admitted to be a root whence every kind of evil can spring up. The millionaire, and the upper ten thousand, are the admiration, if not the envy, of

many; in whose ears the very terms would sound discordant, were they duly attuned to harmony with such notes as these: "Blessed be ye poor;" and again, "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation." Another familiar word, "fashionable," ill agrees with the precept: "Be not conformed to this world." Two other favorite English phrases, "comfortable," and "respectable," express conditions, which although sometimes unobjectionable, often clash with the notion of being willing to "endure hardship," and with the apostolic rule of living "not as pleasing man, but God which seeth the heart." Then we meet with many a man well reported of for good works, who is thriving on the gains of some evil trade or profession; and with others, who being notoriously evil livers, contribute largely to religious institutions. And this mixture of good and evil, as the warp and woof of the same social texture, forms the groundwork of such grotesque doings in English Christendom, as charity balls; and bazaars, wound up with raffling, for church objects; and the interchange of ill timed mirth, and of fulsome compliments, on the platforms of religious meetings; and presentations of superb articles of plate, as testimonials to the worth of faithful pastors. Nor must the idolatry of talent, irrespective of moral worth, and of religious principle, be omitted; as illustrating the merely secondary quality of our present English Christianity. Not to dwell on serious blemishes of this kind, affecting the personal characters of some of the most popular

amongst the senators and statesmen, and great commanders, naval and military, still cherished in the memory of living men, it will suffice to advert to the case of gifted authors, whose vices have been emblazoned in their works. Wherever the English language is spoken, and probably as long as it is spoken anywhere, the cause of good morals must be exposed to serious detriment, by the genius of two favorite modern poets; one of whom, born to poverty in Scotland, had in his character more of nature's true nobility, and less of its ingrained depravity, than the other, who to the charms of his fascinating poetry added the coronet of an English peerage.

The homes of the poorer classes in England present features of special interest, in illustration of its Christian character, quite as noteworthy as those of the more affluent. In the sense of dwelling houses, they are superior, in many districts, to those of other countries, and better supplied with the productions of all quarters of the globe. But owing to the rapid increase of our numbers, in an area of limited extent, they are apt to be much more crowded, especially in towns and cities, than is compatible with healthy or decent habits of life. No small proportion of the members of this class spend their early years in domestic service; there being so many families in a position to give them this employment. In such situations they usually partake of plenty, beyond what they have been accustomed to; and they often witness extravagance and waste. Often also they meet with en-

lightened kindness, and with true sympathy; and serve in ministering to the wants not only of their employers, but also to those of their needy neighbours all around them. With such training, and under such favorable influences, they frequently render their own abodes, however lowly, homes of conjugal and filial affection; cheered by thankful enjoyment of the present, and bright hope of a better life hereafter. And thence go forth day by day willing laborers to do necessary work; and also gifts, contributed to high and holy objects, often larger than those of the wealthy in proportion to the ability of the givers. It must however be admitted, that there are many adverse influences, telling on our working classes most unfavorably, and yielding results the very opposite to the above. Many whilst in domestic service learn to envy the lot from which they are precluded, and to harbour grudges against a class by which they have been unkindly treated. Women chiefly engage in service of this kind; and not unfrequently complain, that they are overworked, or underfed, or unduly fettered at a time of life when restraint, however needful, is most unwelcome. Men serving as laborers, or as mechanics, often give vent to similar complaints of too much work, and too little wages or spare time; contrasting their own continuous employment, with the apparently easy life and large leisure of their employers. Even as to their drinking habits, which they cannot but loathe whilst they still indulge in them, they are well aware, that they are connived at by the selfish

policy of their rulers ; who rely thereon for no small part of the nation's income. Besides all which, the discontent of the working classes with their lot has been lately aggravated by parties interested in persuading them, that a man who has no state power by means of voting "works in chains," and is "out of the pale of the constitution." Under such false teaching, and demoralizing influences, it is no wonder that multitudes of the working class use the tap room for their home, and the newspaper for their bible ; and are ready to pull down those above them rather than to elevate themselves ; nay and even reckon themselves qualified to be legislators, without any self elevation at all. Yet even in these most unpromising regions of English Christendom, instances of true piety in the offspring of reckless parents are occasionally to be met with ; like blossoms of structure the most delicate adorning spots the most uncongenial. But such cases are necessarily rare. And a modern French author has described the usual state of things as follows : "By the side of an opulence, activity, elegance, and wide spread comfort, of which the world has no example, every great city contains a real ghetto, a cursed quarter, a hell upon earth ; where the reality of misery, depravity, and every hideous form of human suffering and degradation surpasses any thing that the imagination of Dante ever conceived, in describing the abode of devils." [M. Buret, quoted in Jennings's *Social Delusions*, p. 48.]

How different are the position, the duties, and the privileges, set before the working classes in the

New Testament; even when house work, and field work, and shop work, used to be done, for the most part, not by hired servants, but by slaves! In those inspired pages, masters are charged to give to servants "that which is just and equal," remembering that they themselves have "a master in heaven." Servants are at the same time instructed to obey, "not with eye service as men pleasers," but with singleness of heart "as fearing God." And so excellent is the liberty wherewith Christ makes believers free, that though a Christian master might do well to liberate his bond-servant, a converted bondservant might be just as happy, abiding "in the calling wherein he was called." For "the time is short;" and "the end is at hand," when bond and free will stand on one and the same footing before the judgment seat of Christ. And in the meanwhile, there is no height of Christian proficiency, from which the lowest rank in the scale of this world can exclude any one. For when the apostle would teach us, that we are privileged to lead a life not only conformable to the Gospel, but ornamental to its native grace and beauty, it is to bondservants above all others that he bids Titus give it specially in charge, "that they adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things."

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTENDOM ; TESTED BY HOLY SCRIPTURE : CONCLUSION.

THE human race, in all ages and in all realms, has with few exceptions entertained the notion of there being around and above it a Power to which it owes its own existence ; and to which also it is more or less responsible. It is an essential peculiarity of Christendom, that it recognizes in the New Testament a written revelation of the attributes of that Power ; of the homage which man is bound to render to it now, and of the account which it will require of man hereafter. These points once admitted, it would seem that man's first object would be to learn exactly what that revelation purports to disclose ; and then to receive its teachings with implicit faith, and to obey its precepts with unswerving faithfulness. And if one of the first things which it tells man be this, that man and the whole universe were made by one and the same Creator, then nothing would seem more absurdly out of place in a human being, than to find fault with any thing once admitted to be revealed. He is free to inquire into the evidence of its being a revelation. He is free to discuss the authenticity of the text commonly

received, the accuracy of the translation in common use, and the correctness of the exposition usually received, as well as of inferences thence derived, and embodied in such human works as creeds, and articles of faith. But as to bringing the dealings of the Almighty to the bar of his creature's judgment, called Free-thinking in the last century, and Free-handling in the present one, this is a thing which no man is at liberty to do; except in this sense, that he is left at liberty to make himself, if he will, by reason of his vanity and foolishness, an object of either scorn or pity to all created intelligence. Even in the exercise of free discussion, it would seem to be an obvious dictate of common sense, to pay due deference to the opinions of good judges, of all ages, according to their opportunities of judging rightly. For revelation is addressed not only to each one of us individually, but also to the collective reason of all mankind. And the right of private judgment is never more perniciously abused, than when individuals set up their own personal convictions as infallibly correct; each standing aloof from communion with his brethren, unless they see everything just as he does himself. The points on which men are most apt to differ are those which are most obscure and most open to debate; and we may be sure that these would not have been left thus undetermined, had it been essential that all should think of them just alike. But in the heat of controversy, the importance of such questions swells to an extent, which diverts attention from those far more weighty matters of

faith and duty, which are written as with a sunbeam on the inspired pages; and as to which no two unprejudiced men can well hold opposite opinions. The degeneracy of Christendom, and the secondary nature of its standard Christianity, would seem to be chiefly owing to the comparative neglect of these plain first principles of holiness, which peremptorily demand a change of heart and life; whilst disproportionate attention has been given to points which make no such demand, or not so urgently, and which afford scope for that propensity to strife, and that eagerness for victory, which are shewn as frequently in wrangling as in fighting.

The evils resulting from the misapplication of the Christian Scriptures by individuals have become more manifest, and far more pernicious, when concentrated in the acts and formularies of churches. It has been seen how much harm was done, whilst Christendom was still in embryo, by the dogmatism of its teachers; who were all the while adulterating the gospel by human philosophy and mythology. In the times of Constantine came in the persecution of Christians by Christians; each party in turn using secular force, when such aid could be secured, for the suppression of free discussion of its tenets by its antagonists. Then arose the blighting supremacy of the popes; under which the bible has been locked up, and even burnt; and those who appealed to it, as the sole test of truth in things divine, have been held accursed, and burnt also when occasion served. And under this eclipse of the light of Scripture, the partizans of the papacy are even

now expecting to establish once more throughout Christendom their much regretted medieval darkness; being ready for that end to make friends alike with despots or with democrats; if by any means they may recover the power now fast failing them, even in lands which were lately their strongholds. In the meanwhile, if any reliance can be placed on official statistics, the realms which are most completely under papal influence yield instances of such crimes as murder, and of such immorality as is evidenced by illegitimate births, in a proportion of some ten to one, as compared with the case of protestant countries. But bigotry is not confined to Rome. No communion in Christendom has a monopoly of either vice or virtue. We have seen how in the Reformation times the very earnestness of the Reformers betrayed them into intolerance; it being a fact that truth is necessarily exclusive of all error; whence men who are convinced that they hold the truth, being apt to identify their own views of it with the reality, are led to conclude that they do well to impose on others their own views. And oftentimes the least informed are the most dogmatic; and are anxious to secure the support of numbers on their side, in proportion as they are destitute of arguments. Thus it comes to pass, that Holy Scripture is resorted to as a magazine of texts for controversy, rather than as the guide and hand book of man's earthly pilgrimage. And even as an intoxicating poison can be distilled, from the very corn which yields the staff of life, men have also

devised so to deal with the bread of life, in the alembic of their own heated imaginations, as thence to derive both stimulants for fanatical delirium, and narcotics for self justifying formalism. Hence artificial systems of divinity, confessions of faith, articles of religion, and even creeds and catechisms, adapted rather for the confutation of them that are without, than for the edifying of believers themselves. Such compositions, bristling with logic and polemics, seem more like fences against trespassers, than like messages to invite guests to a wedding feast. They are apt to define most rigidly, and to explain most elaborately, whatsoever is least capable of exact solution. They ring the changes on free will, and divine decrees; and on such terms as "person" and "substance" in connexion with the sacred being of God himself. But whilst divines are wrangling in the dark about expressions of their own invention, the world waits in vain for their approximation to agreement; or for any like definite announcement of some practical and practicable terms of Christian union. That creed has yet to be composed, and sanctioned by suitable anathemas, which shall run thus: "Who-soever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself." That church has yet to be established, and commended by state adoption and example, which shall glory in an apostolical succession of men "poor in spirit, and prone to mourn for sin, meek, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers."

It is much to be regretted that the creeds common to most Christian churches are still allowed to pass current under titles well known to be fictitious ; giving the false impression, in the case of one of them, that this method of distilling Scripture into a formula, however simple and unobjectionable, has the warrant of apostolical authority. Neither creeds, nor articles, nor even texts of Scripture taken singly, have been relied upon as tests of genuine Christianity, in the present attempt to make it manifest how far Christendom really is or is not really Christian. Rather it is to the New Testament taken as a whole, and in its legitimate connexion with the Old, and to the general tone, tenor, and spirit of its pregnant principles, that reference has been uniformly made ; and more particularly to those of its teachings, in reference to man's walk and conduct in the sight of God, about which the best men of all communions are agreed. It has been seen how many of the ways of Christendom, weighed in Scripture balances thus adjusted, are found wanting. Nations calling themselves Christian have not only not renounced many of the evil ways of Heathendom, but have devised new paths of worldliness peculiar to themselves. In the former class of abominations war stands foremost, for its universal adoption, for its pernicious consequences, and for its direct antagonism to the whole spirit of Christ's gospel. The system of standing armies, now everywhere adopted, has added greatly to the facility of going to war ; and coupled with the celibacy enforced on nine tenths of conscript

millions in the prime of life, is productive of an amount of profligacy, which probably exceeds that of the cloister in the worst times of monks and nuns. And with standing armies, this hideous evil is quite as formidable in time of peace as in time of war; as is also that of diverting so much intelligence and strength from productive labour to the art of mutual destruction. For no sooner is one war ended, than the nations seem intent on preparing themselves with all diligence for another. In this present period of profound peace throughout Europe, they are not unlike to so many beasts of prey in a menagerie; each pacing up and down his own compartment, watching every slightest movement of his neighbours, right and left, and all ready to tear each other to pieces, on any failure of the slight partition which restrains their fury in the interim. Wars to force our commerce on foreigners who have no mind to deal with us are peculiar to Christendom. And though heathen nations had their sacred wars, they had none comparable to that which raged for thirty years in Germany, or to the Crusades, which extended into centuries. Then there are the pomp and circumstance of war, its gorgeous standards, its martial music, its gaudy uniforms, its medals, clasps, and other similar decorations, so little in harmony either with the manly spirit which war undoubtedly evokes, or with the murderous work in which it finds its glory,—all these, if not originated, have been carried to great perfection under the auspices of our secondary Christianity. The like may be said of state page-

antry in general, of court splendour, and of the eager rivalry, among the highest in all realms, for stars, and crosses, and colored ribbons; in the outlay on all which vanities, and on others like them, many a nation, for the gratification of its pride in the glorifying of its rulers, lavishes more than it is willing to lay out on the education of its people, or on the ministrations of its religion. Other points might be mentioned, in which the politics of Christendom have followed in the tracks of heathen precedent; sometimes with slight amendment of evil ways, but more frequently with fresh devices of worldly wisdom, selfishness, and guile. And calling themselves Christian all the while, state rulers have profaned the name of Christ, by misapplying to unworthy uses that transcendent power, which modern science, and commerce, and manufactures, have enabled them to wield. They have even prostituted their sovereign authority, as we have seen, to doing the bidding of the priestly potentate of Rome. In crusades, massacres, and banishments on a large scale, together with the imprisonment and the burning alive of countless individuals, they have inflicted on the score of religion an amount of suffering and carnage, only to be matched by the doings of that great master of battalions; to whom the following words were addressed, in a paper affixed to the column of Austerlitz, in the Place Vendome, and referring to his statue on its summit: "If all the blood of thy shedding could be collected in this Square, it would reach thy lips, and thou mightest drink of it without stooping."

The manners and customs of Christendom, individual and social, have been tried by the same test as those of states and state rulers, namely, by the principles of morality pervading the New Testament. Here the result has been found to be no less clearly inconsistent with any loyal homage to those principles on the part of professing Christians in general. Many of our most boasted Christian efforts, in these latter days, have been only the retracing of errors, or the repairing of wrongs, originated, or long allowed, in the Christendom of our fathers. Slavery abolished, and the slave trade suppressed, remind us, that both these evils long flourished unrestrained. The name of Howard, in connexion with the reform of prison treatment, recalls the memory of the horrors which his exertions brought to light throughout Europe. The name of Romilly not only tells us of his success in mitigating our sanguinary penal code, but also suggests the thought of how much he was aided in succeeding, by the public horror which ensued, when a poor woman with a starving family was hung for shoplifting to the value of one shilling. Again, if we have done away with judicial torture, and if we no longer entertain charges of witchcraft on evidence supplied by morbid imagination, it is to be remembered, that these were established usages amongst our Christian forefathers for many centuries. If we have hospitals for every ill that flesh is heir to, it is no less true that of these ills many arise from self indulgence, or gross vice, and others from the habitual neglect of those laws of health

which are plainly written on man's nature, if he would but study them ; and moreover that most of the sufferers, if not all, would be better nursed in truly Christian homes, only that such are rarely to be met with anywhere. Indeed our late sanitary inquiries have painfully proved our past neglect in this great department of social duty. Our factory laws, and our associations for protecting needlewomen, testify to the practice of overtasking the feeble whether in sex or years. The very name of the Aborigines Protection Society speaks volumes as to the treatment which these helpless beings have heretofore experienced, wherever the white man has set his foot. And we are now treating, be it remembered, of Christendom as a whole, in all its generations. And though we may justly feel thankful for the above and similar amendments of its past misdoings, it must be at the same time admitted, that some evils are still rankling in society, quite as alien to the spirit of the gospel as those of past ages, if not more so. Our public sports, if less barbarous, are not less demoralizing. Drunkenness and licentiousness may be less obtrusive ; but it is hardly possible to conceive of them as more generally practised and connived at, the one chiefly in the Northern realms of Christendom, the other in the Southern. Never were enormous fortunes accumulated more unscrupulously than in modern times ; never were they lavished more selfishly on sumptuous edifices, and furniture, on equipages, and on dress, on gold and silver plate, and jewellery. The ingenuity applied to devising means for securing such goods and

chattels from robbery, as well as the cleverness exhibited by thieves in baffling these precautions, are amongst the noticeable features of modern times. Indeed the extent to which locks, bolts, and bars are improved in construction, and brought everywhere into use, for the prevention of pillaging, may serve as a familiar illustration of the extreme value attached to property as a man's own exclusively, and of the distrust of each other's honesty which is thus generally entertained. Why else does almost every one carry keys about the person? Why do masters lock up from servants, servants from their fellow servants, parents from children, and even husbands and wives from one another? Does it never occur to us, as we turn the key between the wards, that "charity thinketh no evil"? And in the alternative presented by the probability of dishonesty, would it not be better, for ourselves as well as others, to suspect too little, than to distrust too much? When Paul sent for the cloak and the precious parchments he had left at Troas, it is not mentioned that he sent the keys of his desk and wardrobe. Yet few except the most careless now leave their goods unlocked, when they are on a journey. And the most conscientious are usually, and perhaps justly, the most scrupulous, in matters of this kind, to lay no temptation in the path of weaker brethren.

"Thinketh no evil" is not the only clause in which the apostle's well known description of "charity," or love, clashes with the selfish habits which prevail in Christendom. The whole passage

unveils and condemns selfishness in all its aspects. Let us now take some of its chief clauses, and compare them with the corresponding points in the approved pattern of secondary Christian manners, as expressed in the word "gentleman," and in its equivalents in other languages ; we shall then see, that whilst selfishness must be rooted out of the heart in the true Christian, it is enough to constitute a gentleman if it be disguised in the demeanour. Such an one will wear the semblance of "long suffering" and of "kindness," however destitute of the reality. He will be guilty of no rudeness or "indecorum." He will refrain from all manifestation of "self-seeking ;" and will check all outward ebullition of bad "temper ;" and will never manifest unpleasantly the "suspiciousness," and the lack of sympathy in "justice" and in "truth," of which he cannot but be conscious in himself. And this substitution of some sort of courtesy in manner for that love in the heart, of which courteous manners are an outward expression, pervades every class of society ; exposing all who practise it to the perilous consequences of being cognizant of sound principles, and yet consciously ignoring them. For conscience can rarely be quite blind as to the selfish motives ordinarily predominant, under the unselfish exterior commonly assumed. And indeed in this matter men deceive neither themselves nor one another. Rather they have a mutual understanding, that self is to be of course the first object with every one ; and that nevertheless every one, without hypocrisy,

shall have credit for seeming as if his first thought was always for his neighbour. This insincerity, of which men are conscious in themselves, and in all around them, is chiefly practised by the most educated and refined. Only amongst near friends and dear relatives is the stage play suspended, and the selfish tempers are unmasked to some extent; although few probably disclose to any one the darkest secrets that lie lurking in the foul chambers of each unrenewed heart. It is on the strength of manners thus softened by secondary Christianity, that modern civilization is so proud of its good breeding; the polished surface acting like veneer and varnish to give an air of value to the worthless material underneath. And this is only one out of several particulars which make society, as organized in Christendom, seem so far superior to any other yet realized by man's race, that it might pass for one of the most remarkable of all human achievements; if there were no Gospel existing in its custody, and adverted to in its name, at once accounting for its origin, and convicting it of degeneracy from its superhuman parentage.

Christendom, if correctly characterized in these pages, is a society of men who for the most part walk by sight; but who have in the midst of them another society, consisting of those who walk by faith in the unseen. These latter have been expressly told, that they are to be "the salt of the earth," "as a city set on a hill," and as "a light lifted up on high to give light to all around them." In our review of history, we have met with no organized society of

Christians at all answering to these figurative descriptions, no brotherhood of believers testifying to Christ, and adorning his gospel, in the midst of an evil world, at once distinctly, decidedly, and permanently. In all the centuries of Christendom, and in all its sections, ecclesiastical and civil, they that walk by faith and they that walk by sight appear so intermingled, that it is hard to discern one from the other individually; and still more hard to point out any community, civil or religious, in which the worldly have not borne a considerable proportion, as far as man can observe, to the genuine members of Christ's kingdom upon earth. Now we are plainly taught, that believers ought not to aim at living "out of the world;" but neither ought they to live as if they were "of the world," nor so as to be undistinguishable from the worldly. The result of the forbidden fusion of the two societies into one has been most injurious to both of them. In this "communion of light with darkness," it proves doubly hard, for those who have been called out of the evil world, to escape the contamination of a worldly spirit. Accordingly we have seen churches, and their pastors of all grades, infected with the love of power and of riches; jealous of each other's temporal prosperity, and grudging each other the glory of an increase in spiritual influence. As to individuals in private life, it is true that many have been noted for high spiritual attainments; and many more, unknown to fame, must have been helping, though perhaps unconsciously, to infuse into the world around them the spirit of un-

selfishness and love. Yet our daily experience of others, and of ourselves, shows how almost impossible it is to live in a world at once so worldly and so civilized, and not to yield more or less to its seductions; not to trust in riches, if we have them, or, if destitute, not to covet them; but to be truly "poor in spirit," that is to say, to have the spirit schooled unto a willingness to be poor, if God so orders it; to count also power, pleasure, praise, even all that this world has to give, but dross, if we may "win Christ," and be found in Him, "at the day of his appearing." Whilst the predominance of the worldly minded in Christendom has had this deteriorating influence on those who would fain be spiritually minded, so likewise have the shortcomings of the latter robbed the worldly of one chief help provided, according to God's word, for their instruction and conversion unto godliness. If it was "by the church" that "the manifold wisdom of God" was to be made manifest to powers above, much more ought it by this means to be made known and acceptable to the race of man on earth. And when our blessed Lord prayed earnestly that believers might be one in Him, it was to the end that the world might be thereby led to believe in Him and in his gospel. Nevertheless disunion, and dissensions, and animosities therewith connected, have prevailed in Christendom, ever since the Corinthians were taxed with schism by the apostle. And in view of church divisions and corruptions, an eloquent French preacher thus addresses the Almighty: "O Thou who didst once repent Thee

that Thou madest man, hast Thou never repented of having made the church?" The clergy, too often looked upon as "the church," in all communions, and who ought to be "ensamples to the flock," instead of being noted for their comprehensive spirit, are generally regarded by the laity as exclusive and narrow minded. And both they, and the most highly esteemed of devout laymen, in all ages, would have been much more likely to win the world from its evil ways, if in their efforts to amend themselves, they had been more mindful of a much neglected apostolic precept: "Be ye also enlarged."

Before concluding it may be well to obviate some of the objections likely to be made to the view of Christendom taken in this Sketch. One of the most fatal, if it could be sustained, is this, that the actual standard of gospel morality is not so high as herein represented. And undoubtedly it has been of late an object with a certain class of writers to rate it very low. A living author of considerable influence has a passage in one of his treatises replete with such assertions as the following: that "the only worth recognized in the Christian standard of ethics is that of obedience;" and again, "that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith." (J. S. Mill on Liberty, p. 91-93.) Many of the arguments in behalf of free discussion, which do credit to that able work, are directly traceable to Gospel principles. Other-

wise it would seem, as if the author had drawn his conclusions from the secondary religion current in Christendom, instead of consulting the pages of the New Testament. For there he would have found it written, that "God is love," and that man is charged to become like minded to his Maker; and again, that "Love is the fulfilling of the law," and that "to love God with all the heart, and love our neighbour as ourselves, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." It would surely be hard to say, what language can set the standard of morality at a higher elevation than this. It would be hard to imagine any greatness of mind or spirit, in the discharge of duty to our country or our kind, any magnanimity in self sacrifice, any generosity in giving or forgiving, which are not included in such pregnant principles as these. And these are the very rays which form the brightness of that gospel light, in which Christendom has here been viewed, in connexion with well authenticated history. Would that the features thus delineated could wear a more satisfactory expression!—But further, it may be objected, that these principles of evangelical morality, however fitted to form man's nature for a higher state of being, are little applicable to his conduct in the world that now is; and especially that they are not in harmony with the liberal spirit, and the rapid progress, of modern civilization. The models of civil polity now frequently referred to, as most worthy of imitation, are the republics of antient Greece and Rome. Great things are also expected from art, as culti-


vated in those communities, in ameliorating the condition of mankind. It seems to be forgotten, that the fine arts have in point of fact flourished most in times and lands when morality has been at its lowest ebb. And it is not sufficiently considered, if at all, that in Greece and Rome all the drudgery of daily life was done by slaves ; an arrangement whereby the freemen were left at leisure to become qualified for taking an active part in state affairs. Further it may be confidently asserted, that institutions do not so much form men, as men form institutions ; and that therefore little good can be expected from amending the frame of civil polity, till men first amend the fashion of their own lives. Whether any means for such amendment more effectual than genuine Christianity can be devised, may indeed be an open question in some quarters ; but certainly not in Christendom ; where the Gospel is accepted as an undoubted revelation from on high.—Once more, it may be objected, that if the view here taken of Christendom be correct, there has been a failure of the parting promise of our Lord to his disciples : “ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” This promise is however closely linked with the words immediately preceding it ; with the charge to make disciples of all nations, both baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded. If Christendom has ignored this last express condition, has neglected this most essential point of practical duty, how dare it presume to plead the promise ; how venture to assume that it must

needs have been fulfilled? The gates of Hades never have prevailed, and we may feel assured they never will, against that church of Christ, which is founded on the rock of faith in Him, a faith working by love and by obedience. But as to churches built upon the fictitious primacy of Peter, or on any succession of pastors indicated, as in the practice of the apostles, by the laying on of hands, or on the performance of the outward rite of baptism, even though ordained by Christ himself, so long as the teaching which He coupled with it is neglected, it must be obvious, that no such churches have any right to claim support, guidance, or protection, on the strength of a promise in which they have no part. And if Christendom be indeed as little Christlike as we have found it, this must be owing to its own default of duty; to which also must be ascribed the fact, that it has so little prospered, for many ages, in its missionary calling; insomuch that more than half of the human race are not yet joined to it even in name, but seem waiting to be converted to a faith less subjected to the influences of sense, to a kingdom of Christ, which, though in this world, shall not be "of this world."

The sovereignty of our blessed Lord, as King in his own domains, is a topic with which our whole discussion may be now suitably concluded. Christians everywhere profess to hold, that Christ is King over all; and acknowledge that He "must reign till He hath put all enemies under his feet." And yet Christendom has in every age had the aspect of a kingdom without a king; so little has Christ's

sovereign presence been recognized, so largely has his sovereign authority been held in abeyance. According to the prevalent secondary Christianity, Christ is generally known and welcomed as Saviour of sinners ; but not as saving his people "from their sins," not as "King of saints." To rule, and to be obeyed, are the first elements in our conception of sovereignty. But every successive corruption of Christ's gospel has tended to lull man's conscience in a course of disobedience ; purporting by some ingenious device to make him safe to all eternity, however wilfully and rebelliously he may here indulge his own pride, passion, and propensities. We read that of old, "when there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes." And so it has been throughout all the centuries of Christendom. So also it is in every stage of each man's life ; in youth, when pleasure pleads for disobedience, and in later years, when covetousness or ambition prompt revolt against that "royal law" which is "according to the Scripture ;" the words with which the wayward heart is ever tempted to reply are still the same : "We will not have this man to reign over us." Yet it is well known, that besides commanding, it is the king's province to sit in judgment, and pronounce sentence on wilful transgressors. And we have been expressly told, that this particular function of the kingly office has been committed, for good reason assigned, to Him, whose laws, as we have seen, have been set at nought in all ages, by the community to which his name has been ap-

propriated. We justly value, amongst ourselves, the exercise of the supreme authority of the state, in the impartial administration of justice? How then can we doubt, that an account will have to be given hereafter, by all who call themselves Christians, to their King, for all the idolatries committed by the superstitious, for all the wrongs inflicted on the helpless, for health and strength wasted in base sensuality, for time and treasure lavished on luxurious self indulgence, and for all the blood shed in the selfish gratification of ambition, persecution, and revenge? But, let it be added, with humble thankfulness, that even as mercy is the brightest jewel in the crown of earthly sovereigns, so also to forgive is the distinguishing prerogative of the King who reigns in heaven, supreme over all on earth. His gospel is a message of pardon to the penitent, and a law of liberty ever after to the believer;—a law which must indeed be fulfilled, but which, with his help, love is capable of fulfilling. And when the gospel, thus understood, shall be accepted, as heartily and unreservedly, as it is freely and universally offered, then, and not till then, will Christendom prove itself worthy of its name;—in the visible agreement of Christians with each other,—in their moral elevation above the rest of the human race,—in their working together for every humane and holy purpose,—and in their loving subjection unto Christ their King.

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the 1990s, the number of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia has increased by 20% (Meltzer 1997).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with mental health problems. The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a 'Global Strategy for the Management of Mental Health' (WHO 1993). This strategy emphasizes the need for a 'comprehensive approach' to mental health care, which includes the provision of 'social and psychological support' as well as 'medical treatment'. The strategy also emphasizes the need for 'community-based care' and 'rehabilitation'.

In the UK, the Department of Health has developed a 'Mental Health Strategy' (DoH 1999). This strategy emphasizes the need for a 'comprehensive approach' to mental health care, which includes the provision of 'social and psychological support' as well as 'medical treatment'. The strategy also emphasizes the need for 'community-based care' and 'rehabilitation'.

The 'Mental Health Strategy' also emphasizes the need for 'early intervention' and 'prevention'. This is reflected in the 'Mental Health Act 1983', which provides for the 'early identification and treatment' of people with mental health problems. The Act also provides for the 'prevention' of mental health problems.

The 'Mental Health Strategy' also emphasizes the need for 'rehabilitation' and 'social support'. This is reflected in the 'Mental Health Act 1983', which provides for the 'rehabilitation' of people with mental health problems. The Act also provides for the 'social support' of people with mental health problems.

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